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# TRAVELER

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015

GRAND  
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NEW  
ORLEANS  
BOUNCES  
BACK

EUROPE'S  
RISING  
STARS

24

*Great Places  
You'll Want to  
Visit Next*

Inside  
**VATICAN  
CITY**





AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015

VOLUME 32, NO. 5

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TALK  
TO US

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POSTCARD PROJECT

## Wish You Were Here

ARE POSTCARDS OBSOLETE? Features editor Amy Alipio pondered this in a March *Intelligent Travel* blog post. With the ease of Instagram and Facebook, who still writes and mails a postcard? A lot of our readers, it turns out. Within a month of the post, more than 250 pieces of snail mail

landed at *Traveler*. The postcards—some hand-painted, some created using the sender's own photos—came from all over the world, from Mauritius to Mars, Pennsylvania. All conveyed a similar message: In this digital age, postcards connect in a uniquely personal way.

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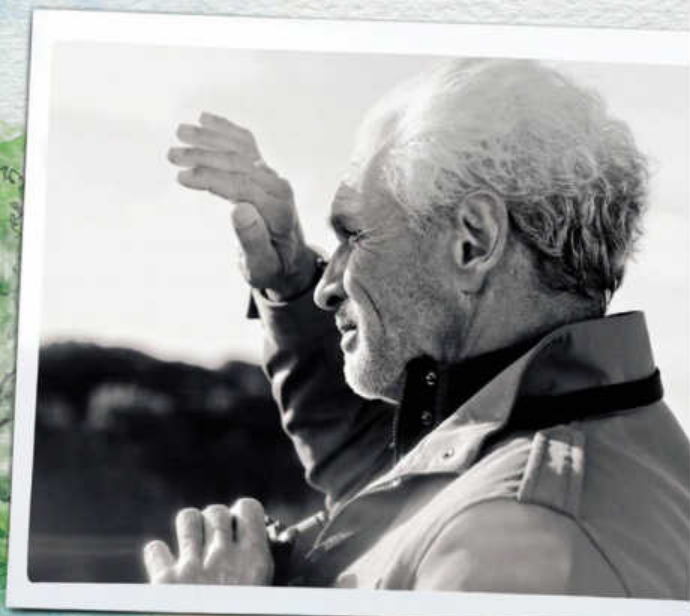
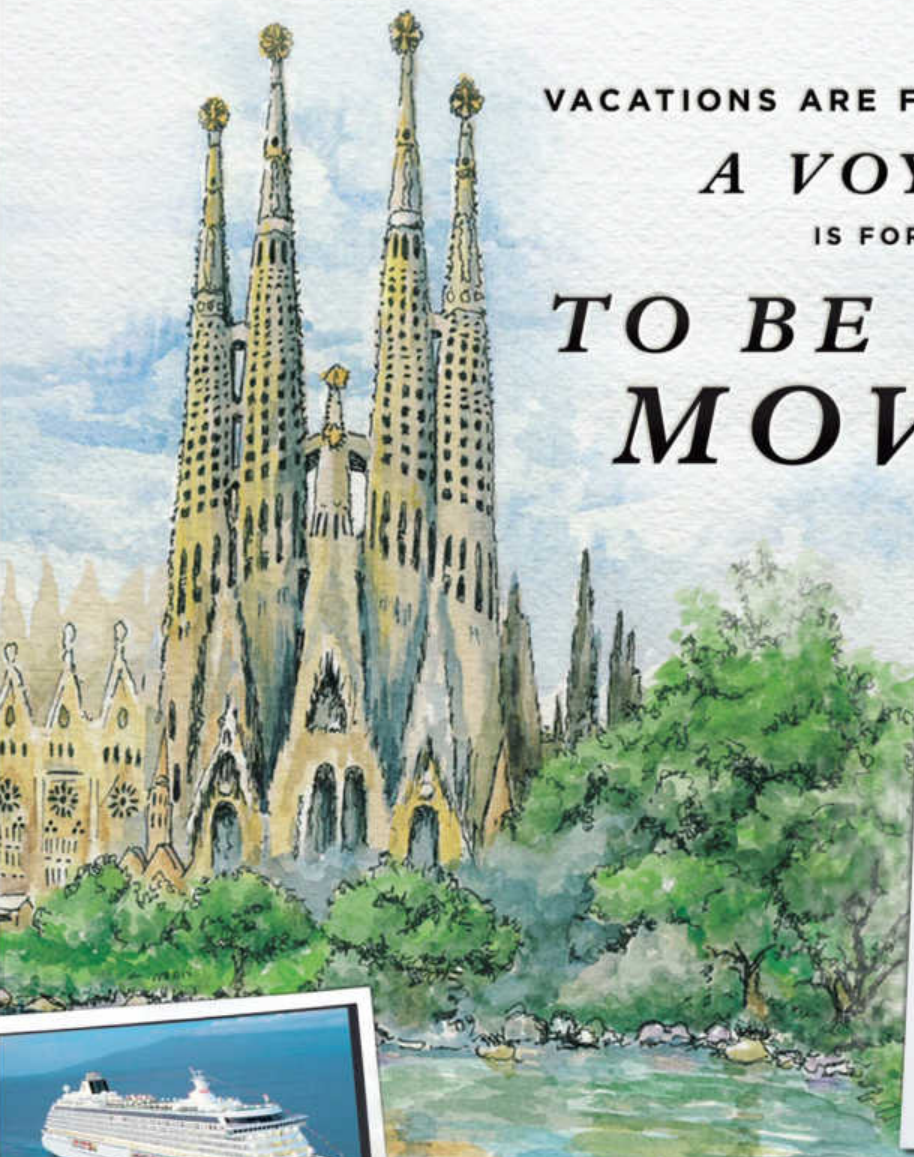


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*I'd wondered what it would be like to see La Sagrada Família. Now all I wonder is which part Gaudi imagined first. The architecture? Design? Engineering? Maybe we'll admire all of the above until we get hungry. Or thirsty. Tonight's menu in the Vintage Room is paired with 8 vintage wines, with a few Spanish classics chosen by the Head Sommelier himself. My palate can't wait to be refined.*



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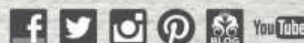
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NEW BOOK

# The World in Your Backyard

Visit other countries without ever stamping your passport. Here are a few of our favorite international festivals, foods, and finds around the United States, from National Geographic's new *Abroad at Home* book.



St. Anthony statue in Boston

## Italy in Boston

For a few days in late August, Boston's Italian North End neighborhood honors St. Anthony with a ten-hour procession of his statue and a feast of cannoli, *arancini* (rice balls), and zeppole.

## Cuba in Tampa

Cuba may have started to open its doors, but you can still experience Havana in Tampa's Cuban quarter, Ybor City. Wander down Seventh Avenue for Cuban sandwiches and hand-rolled cigars.

## Brazil in Seattle

For a one-day celebration of all things Brazilian, Seattle's BrasilFest—held this year on August 16—brings high-kicking capoeira, shake-it samba, grilled meats, and *pão de queijo* (cheesy rolls).

CHECK OUT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S *ABROAD AT HOME*, IN STORES NOW.

WHAT I KNOW



PETE McBRIDE  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
RIVER DANCE, PAGE 30

## Above and Beyond

My favorite shot ever is the cover image of my book [*The Colorado River*], which is an aerial of a double oxbow in Canyonlands National Park. Not only is the site a magical place, but I was able to capture it from my father's single-engine plane while he piloted at sunrise.

## Peak Experience

Working inside the Khumbu Icefall on the Nepalese side of Mount Everest was full of surprises, such as the beauty of the mountain and the generosity of the human spirit. But the depth of ambition and ego in others was alarming. It was a journey into extremes—physically and emotionally.

## All the Right Moves

I recently did a source-to-sea Ganges River trip and spent a morning learning dance moves from a professional Bollywood choreographer who happened to be staying in the same hotel. Not your typical morning.

## Next Up

I'm doing a film on Martin Litton, the conservationist who helped keep dams out of the Grand Canyon and the Grand Canyon Dories founder. I'll be rowing the Colorado River in a baggage boat along with a dory named for Litton, who passed last year.

—Monika Joshi

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Lingyin Temple



Xixi National Wetland Park

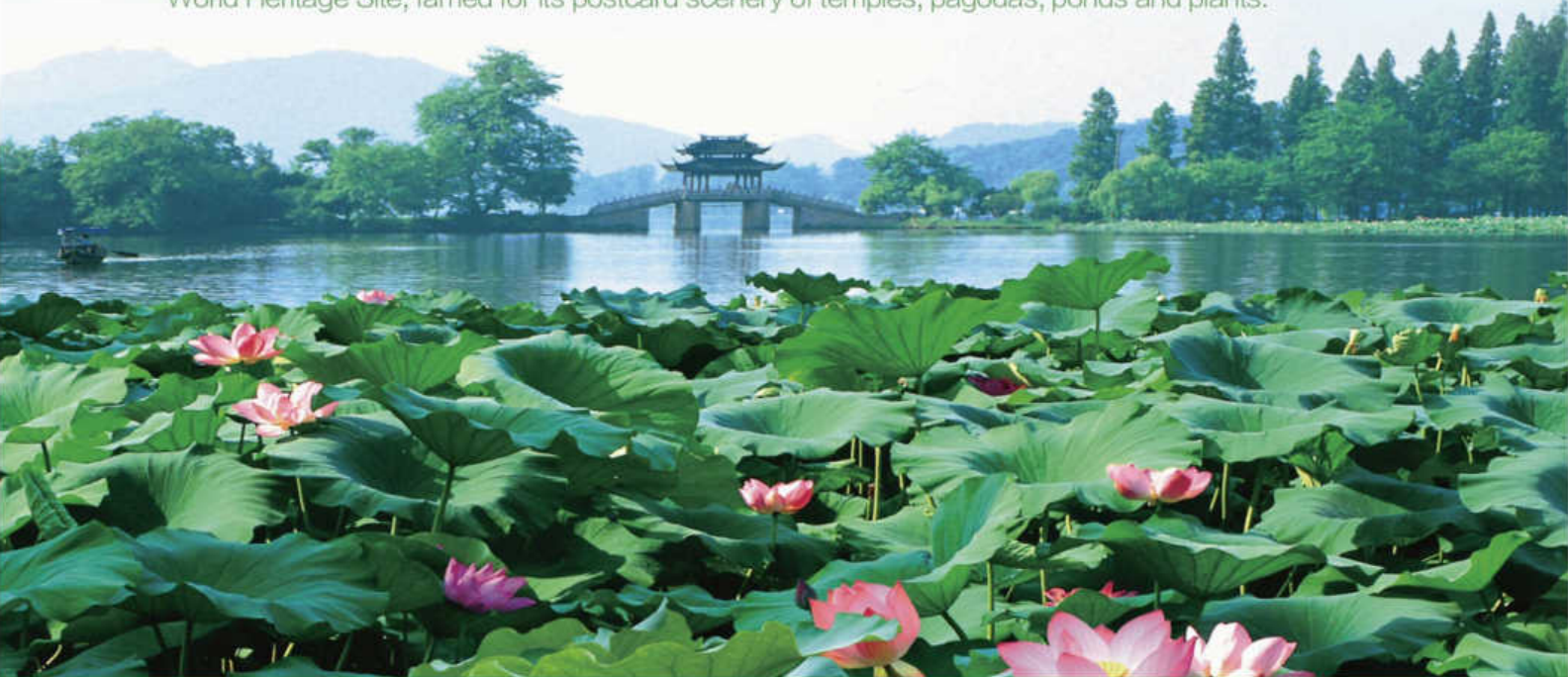


Hangzhou Grand Canal

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#### THROUGH THE LENS

## Capturing Natural Light

Nevada Wier, award-winning National Geographic contributing photographer and world traveler, shares her insights on creating the best image.



"Light is the single most important element in photography. The trick is to use it in a startling way. I like photographing at the edge of light, when sunrise and sunset can produce such extreme colors. Both of these images were made in equatorial parts of the world where those transition times and hues are fast and fleeting.

I photographed the U Bein Bridge, in Myanmar, just after sunset. The moving bicycles, tree limbs, bold yellow, and silhouette show how light, color, action, and pattern can combine in one instant to make an image unique. The fishing nets in Cochin, India, were also photographed at sunset. In this case, that little blue sail against the orange sky became the special punctuation that I needed to set the image apart.



You can't plan pictures like these, but you can train your eye to be ready for them. The right design, framing, and moment all matter—but light binds it all together."

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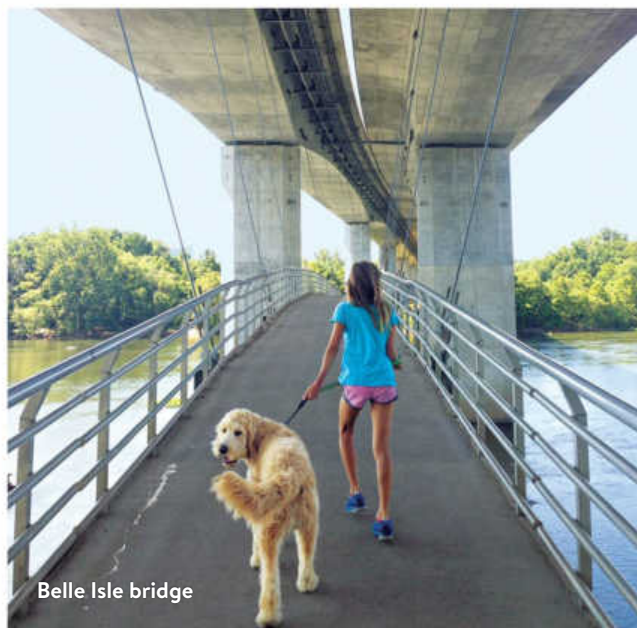
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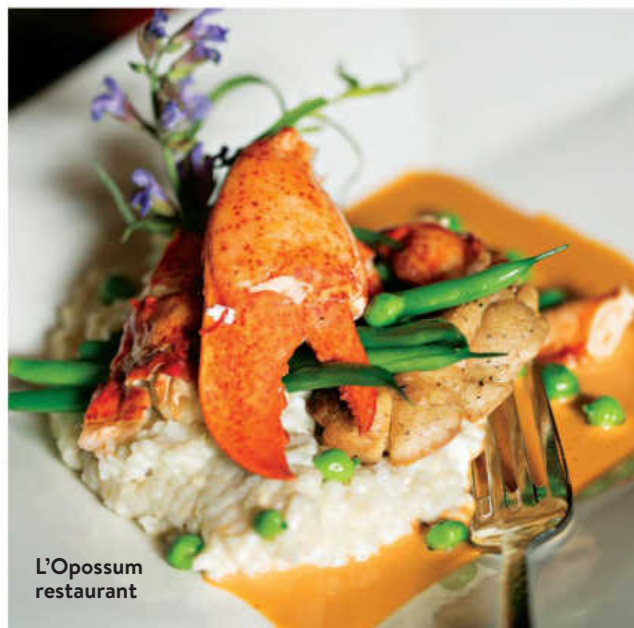
**The Graduate  
Athens hotel  
in Georgia**

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Belle Isle bridge



L'Opossum restaurant

WHERE TO GO NEXT

## VIRGINIA'S CAPITAL OF CHARM

RICHMOND ZIPS AWAY from its sleepy southern past with a blend of modern culture and cuisine. In September, professional cyclists will race in the UCI Road World Championships along the same streets and James River-skirting trail that lure leisure cyclists (rent wheels from **Riverside Outfitters**). The food scene goes “beyond ‘where can I get crab cakes?’ to noodle houses, pie shops, and breweries,” says Maureen Egan of Real Richmond Food Tours. Try **Blue Bee Cider** or **L'Opossum's** South-meets-France bistro fare (ham escargot biscuits, lavender grits). For visual feasts, the **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts** boasts a collection of 21st-century art from around the world. Quirky **Carytown** hosts bookstores, outdoor cafés, and vintage clothing boutiques. —*Jennifer Barger*



Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Proper Pie Co.



ADVENTURE

# Biking in America

*Pedal for pleasure along these four scenic routes*

SOUTH CAROLINA

**SWAMP RABBIT TRAIL**

Opened in 2009, the 18.7-mile Greenville Health System trail in the foothills of upstate South Carolina winds from Greenville's downtown along the Reedy River to the small town of Travelers Rest. Formerly an old railbed, the multiuse greenway is beloved by residents, including Tour de France veteran cyclist George Hincapie. Grab a sandwich and scone to go at the trailside Swamp Rabbit Café & Grocery, and picnic on the leafy Furman University campus near the end of the route.

PENNSYLVANIA, MARYLAND

**GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE**

More than 35 years in the making, the 150-mile GAP opened in 2013, linking the onetime rail route between downtown Pittsburgh and Cumberland, Maryland, with a nearly level crushed limestone path. Pedal past forests, farms, and parks, crossing the Eastern Continental Divide and the Mason-Dixon Line. For long-haul bikers, there are campsites along the way, and inns within a quick detour. Not long enough? Ride an additional 185 miles to Washington, D.C., on the C&O Canal towpath.

TEXAS

**WILLOW CITY LOOP**

Thanks to the Lone Star State's robust cycling culture, this 55-mile rural loop through the rolling landscape and limestone cliffs of Texas Hill Country has become as popular with bikers as it is with Sunday drivers. During the spring, meadows come alive with wildflowers—Mexican poppies, bluebonnets, and Indian paintbrush. Go on a weekday to avoid the crowds, resist the temptation to trespass on private side roads, and save some energy for the epic climb at the end.

MASSACHUSETTS

**CAPE COD RAIL TRAIL**

Forged by the Old Colony Railroad Company in 1848, the route from Boston to Sandwich—and later, to the tip of the peninsula—popularized Cape Cod among New Englanders. The railroad is long gone, save for 22 miles of the corridor from Dennis to Wellfleet that has been repurposed as a bike trail. Ride from village to village, passing cranberry bogs, salt marshes, and pine forests. Go the extra mile beyond trail's end to Maguire Landing Beach for an ocean swim. —Margaret Loftus

A shingled beach cottage off the Cape Cod Rail Trail





LOCAL FLAVOR

## PEARLS OF THE OCEAN

OYSTERS ARE THE FOOD OF THE GODS. Creamy mouthfuls eaten raw, they pack nutrients like zinc and iron. They're good for the ocean too. Oysters are self-sustaining and improve water quality. Need more incentive? Scientists say Casanova, who allegedly breakfasted on 50 oysters a day, was right all along about that aphrodisiac thing. Cultivated in the waters of the Atlantic (about 85 percent of U.S. oysters) and Pacific, "today, virtually all oysters are farmed," says Rowan Jacobsen, author of *A Geography of Oysters*. The harvest increases each year to satisfy a growing national appetite. Like a fine wine, oysters have a flavor profile determined by their species and nature of the water they grow in. On the East Coast, look for sweet Wellfleets from Cape Cod, and briny Olde Salts from the Chesapeake Bay. And, the rule of consuming oysters only in months that contain the letter *r*—i.e., never in summer—has been shucked. "We eat them safely year-round," says Jacobsen. Where to slurp? Try Washington, D.C.'s Old Ebbitt Grill, New York's Grand Central Oyster Bar & Restaurant, San Francisco's Hog Island Oyster Bar, or New Orleans' Acme Oyster House. —April Fulton

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BOOKSHELF

## Ready-to-Go New Reads

*Titles that take you from Africa to the Oregon Trail*

LIONESSES ARE preying on women in a remote Mozambican village, but in Mia Couto's compelling novel **Confession of the Lioness**, hunters and victims are not quite as they seem.

You may be a bit foggy on details of the first Opium War (1839-42) in India and China. Amitav Ghosh, in his novel **Flood of Fire**, brings to life the conflict's—and the countries'—many layers with his multinational cast of merchants, soldiers, sailors, prostitutes, and a grieving drug addict.

A man travels 2,000 miles by mule-pulled covered wagon on **The Oregon Trail** from Missouri



Mozambique is the setting for award-winning writer Couto's novel (portrait of a local girl, above).

to the Pacific Ocean, dodging thunderstorms, repairing broken wheels, and scouting trails. A legendary pioneer? No, just Rinker Buck, a 21st-century New Jersey native who recounts his passion for exploring America slowly.

Thirty-six-year-old "confirmed Bostonian" Tracy Slater ventures to Japan to teach English and falls in love with a 31-year-old Osaka salaryman. She weds, becomes an ambivalent *shufu*, or housewife, and concocts the moving cross-cultural memoir **The Good Shufu**.

—Don George

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TRENDING

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

A NOTABLE thing is taking place around the globe: Communities and conservation entrepreneurs are creating private nature reserves, from coral lagoons in Asia to sanctuaries in the Americas. Travelers to Africa will find private wildlife reserves near national parks. Case in point: South Africa's Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, which manages 6,178 acres of reclaimed habitat, including native fynbos shrubland harboring sunbirds (bottom).

Two hours southeast of Cape Town, Grootbos—a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World—was a mosaic of abandoned farms and degraded lands when Michael Lutzeyer laid eyes on it in 1991. "Here was one of Earth's rarest ecosystems, what botanists call the Cape Floral Kingdom, with no protection," says the Cape Town native. "My wife and I pulled together what cash we could to conserve it ourselves." Today Grootbos employs villagers and funds such community programs as a horticulture college offering job training for unemployed youth. It joins a worldwide trend of private reserves that are producing conservation success stories, a good thing for our natural world—and us travelers.

—Costas Christ



SILKE WERNET/LAIF/REDUX (GIRL), GROOTBOS (BIRD)





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YOUR SHOT

## MOON OVER MADAGASCAR

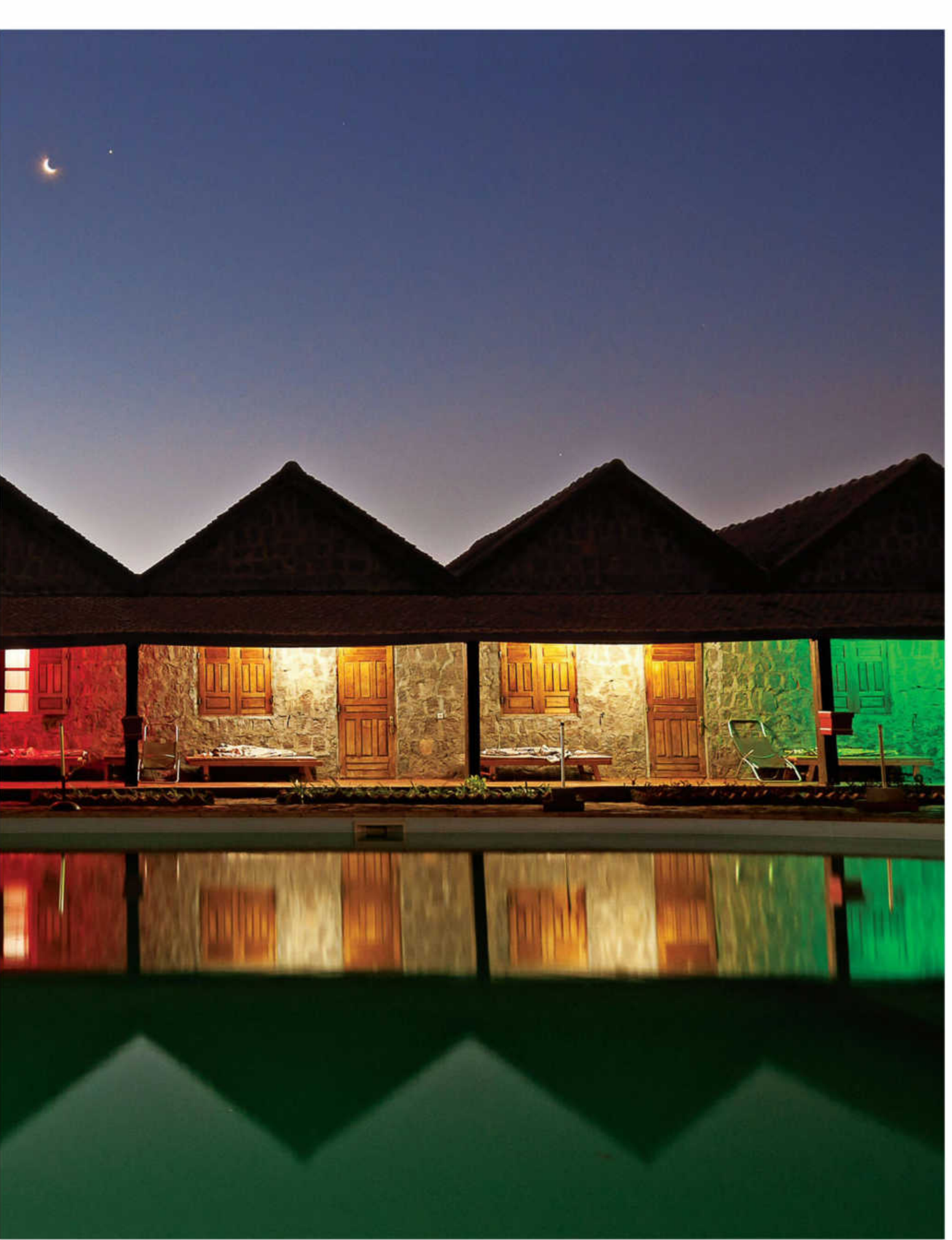
With a wink to Malagasy loyalists and geography buffs alike, Italian photographer Michele Martinelli notes that the porch lights of this motel in Ranohira, Madagascar, mimic the red, green, and white of the island nation's flag.

**Getting the shot** Martinelli and his wife (pictured) stayed in Ranohira before exploring the sculpted rock formations of nearby Isalo National Park. At first Martinelli found the motel's lights garish, but seeing the colors at sunset struck a chord. "Our second evening there, I noticed the moon up and the reflection of the rooms in the pool," he says. "Combining all these details at night made for a beautiful scene." **What we liked** "The symmetrical composition and colored lights are what really catch my eye," says *Traveler's* director of photography, Dan Westergren. "The weighting of the image leaves a little breathing room for the moon—a good choice by the photographer, since the roofs are so evenly spaced."

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Johnny Cash's childhood room (as well as his favorite book)

## HOUSE TOUR

# The Roots of Johnny Cash

*In the Arkansas Delta, homage and history at the singer's home*

THOUGH THE MAN IN BLACK never really “shot a man in Reno”—don’t believe all the song lyrics—he did pick “cotton in the bottom-land” as the son of an Arkansas Delta farmer. His family’s 1930s homestead, meticulously restored, opened a year ago as a museum. It’s located an hour north of Memphis in Dyess, a New Deal resettlement colony created in 1934. Along with 500 or so families, the Cashes received a white cottage and 20 acres here and set to work clearing and farming the fertile land. For Johnny Cash buffs, ephemera on exhibit range from his Boy Scout card to the pillow of his beloved brother Jack. (The 2005 biopic *Walk the Line* depicted Jack’s death in a childhood accident.)

Led by a guide through the Cash home,

tourgoers discover its five rooms as they originally appeared. Not surprisingly, the family piano (untuned to preserve its innards, though family members love to play it when they visit) holds court in the living room. An old hymnal remains open to “The Unclouded Day,” the first song Cash performed in public.

This is more than a shrine for music lovers. From its butter churn to the quilt frame that lowers from the living room ceiling, “the house evokes wonderful memories of what life was like for farm families during the 1930s and 1940s,” says Ruth Hawkins, who led the restoration project for Arkansas State University’s Heritage Sites program. This time capsule of the Depression era is anything but depressing.

—Katie Knorovsky

## CAVEAT

### Study the Fine Print

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There’s a long list of items for which airlines aren’t liable on a domestic flight, including antiques, books, computers, and strollers. Clothes are safe, though.



#### CRUISE ITINERARIES ARE MERELY SUGGESTIONS

Companies can skip port stops anytime during the trip, meaning your ship could sail to the middle of the Caribbean and back, making no ports of call. All you’d get would be a refund of port fees.



#### NEVER TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Car rental companies can void insurance coverage if you violate your agreement. Turns out, one of the provisions is that you stick to paved roads.

That’s not easy in rural areas, especially when the GPS points you down a dirt road.

—CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT



# WORLD LEGACY AWARDS



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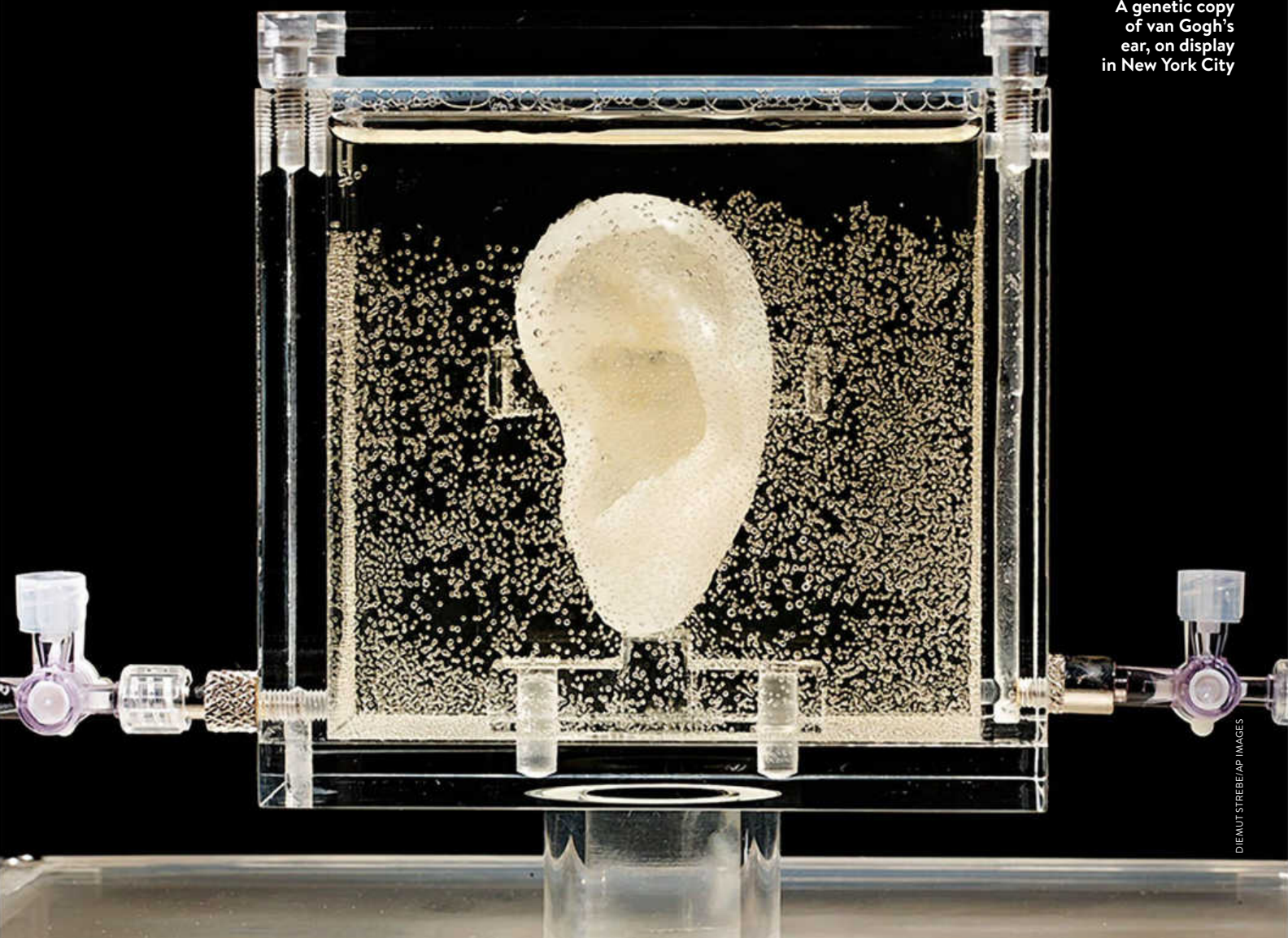
# Stop, Look, and Listen

*Around the world with Vincent van Gogh*

WANT TO OBSERVE THE 125th anniversary of Vincent van Gogh's untimely death? Here are five places to experience the Postimpressionist painter's legacy—minus the absinthe. **Eindhoven, Netherlands** Look down for a stellar sight along the new "Starry Night"-inspired bike path, made with solar-powered stones. **New York City** The Ronald Feldman Gallery hosts a living-tissue replica of van Gogh's ear, created by artist Diemut Strebe with DNA from a descendant of the artist's brother. **Arles, France** Dine under the famous yellow awning of Café la Nuit—now the Café van Gogh—the outdoor eatery depicted in van Gogh's "Café Terrace at Night." **Tilburg, Netherlands** Make your own masterpiece at an interactive re-creation of van Gogh's high school art classroom. **Auvers, France** Though he originally hailed from Holland, the cemetery where the artist and his brother Theo are buried is located in a northwestern suburb of Paris.

—Hannah Sheinberg

A genetic copy  
of van Gogh's  
ear, on display  
in New York City





# HAWAII'S

## LOCAL FOOD SCENE



Four can't-miss Hawai'i restaurants with a bias for fresh, locally sourced ingredients



**Mud Hen Water** opened in Honolulu in June and brought with it chef Ed Kenney's penchant for farm-to-table ingredients. Try the i'a lāwalu, a flavor-bursting concoction of opah (Hawaiian moonfish), steamed green bananas, and coconut cream. At **Merriman's Waimea**, nestled in a small paniolo (cowboy) town on Hawai'i Island, chef Peter Merriman hasn't strayed from the regional cuisine that inspired him to pioneer a locavore food movement in the Islands more than 25 years ago. For a table by the sea, visit **Mama's Fish House**, on Maui's north shore. Given the name, it's no surprise that local anglers drop off their catch daily. Set in Hanalei, a laid-back town on Kaua'i's north shore—picture surf beaches and waterfalls cascading down mountains—**Bar Acuda** matches the mood with its casual tapas-style eatery and a menu inspired by chef Jim Moffat's travels in southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Die-hard foodies should consider a trip during the **Hawai'i Food & Wine Festival**, a two-week celebration (August 29 through September 13, 2015) of sustainable cuisine on Maui, O'ahu, and Hawai'i Island, featuring more than a hundred international chefs and winemakers.



To plan your vacation to the Hawaiian Islands, visit [gohawaii.com](http://gohawaii.com).

Photos (top right, above) courtesy Merriman's Waimea

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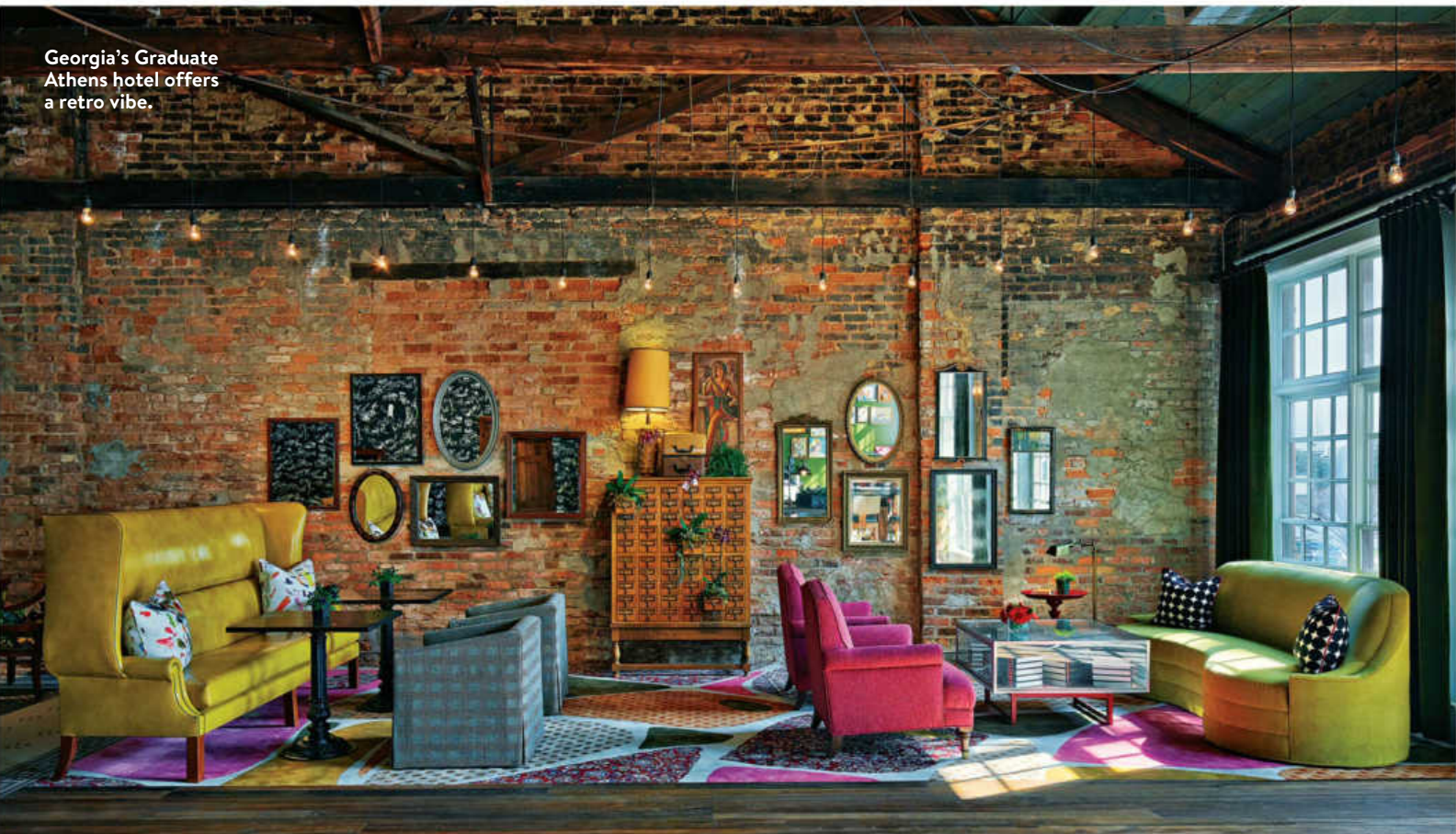


CHECKING IN

# Off-Campus Housing

*College town hotels that make the grade*

Georgia's Graduate Athens hotel offers a retro vibe.



## STONE PORCH BY THE LAKE

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

**Campus tour:** Thirty minutes from downtown Chicago, this restored 1889 Tudor mansion across from Lake Michigan is the first boutique lodging in Northwestern University's hometown. **Top grades:** The inn features geothermal power and guest rooms outfitted with organic mattresses, linens, and sea-inspired toiletries. **Extracurriculars:** Rent a sailboat or paddleboard at the university's new Wildcat sailing center for an alternative to the many cultural offerings on campus. **Tuition:** From \$275.

## HOTEL CASA 425

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

**Campus tour:** Soak in the Southern California lifestyle at this modern hacienda-style hotel (35 miles east of L.A.) built around a courtyard in artsy Claremont, home to the Claremont Colleges (aka 7Cs) three blocks away. **Top grades:** The 28 spacious rooms, with soaking tubs and outdoor patios, echo the overall glossy white theme. **Extracurriculars:** Complimentary bicycles and "Vino & Vinyasa" yoga and wine tastings on select Sunday afternoons in the Casa courtyard. **Tuition:** From \$195.

## GRADUATE ATHENS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

**Campus tour:** Homey charm is enhanced with touches like University of Georgia bulldog desk lamps and chalkboards in each of the 122 rooms. **Top grades:** Guests mingle in the hotel's living-room reception area, fueled by locally roasted coffee and complimentary jelly beans. **Extracurriculars:** Athens was founded on cotton wealth; today, it's a haven for music lovers. Music historian Paul Butchart leads tours highlighting hangouts of groups with roots here like R.E.M. and the B-52s. **Tuition:** From \$100.

CHRISTIAN HORAN PHOTOGRAPHY





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THINGS WE LOVE

## A Free-for-All on Porter Airlines

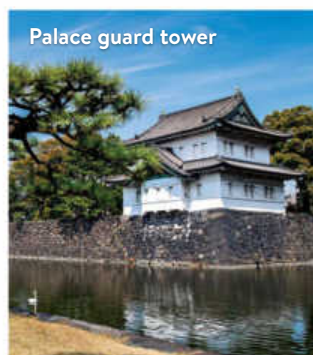
It's rare to get peanuts on a flight anymore, let alone free booze. But **Porter Airlines**, whose small headquarters is in Toronto, offers complimentary pours of local Canadian beer and wine—served in actual glassware. The affordable ticket prices, airport lounges stocked with free snacks, and customer service that's reminiscent of the golden days of air travel are all just bonuses.

TRAVELING WITH KIDS

## TWEENS TAKE TO TOKYO

**Q.** I'm taking my middle-school-age daughter to Tokyo. Is it kid-friendly? "Japan's capital city offers traditional culture, yet it's hip in terms of pop culture and technology to keep children engaged," says Akane Tanaka, chief concierge at the Peninsula Hotel in Tokyo. Limit activities to one special interest spot per day like Sanrio Puroland (the Hello Kitty theme park) or bustling Tsukiji fish market. Stay in a hotel near the Imperial Palace. Free tours of the palace interior require reservations, but the gardens outside are perfect for picnics and exploring. Tip: The Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute provides free bikes for use on the palace cycling course on Sundays. Near Harajuku Station, hunt for souvenirs along pedestrian-only Takeshita Street. Lastly, take the train, says Tanaka. "I have yet to see a child who doesn't flip out at the chance to ride on the bullet train."

—Heather Greenwood Davis



Palace guard tower



PROBLEM SOLVED

## Are Shore Excursions Worth It?

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

**Q.** Should I book a cruise line's shore excursion, or plan my own sightseeing tour? Though some excursions are included in the price of sailing, you'll generally pay more for an outing booked through a cruise line. But you often get more, too. On my last shore excursion, our guide met us on the ship and offered lunch, ponchos, and a "no passenger left behind" guarantee. Then again, reputable third-party companies such as Viator or Gray Line offer tours up to 40 percent cheaper than the typical excursion. Have your sights set on something unique? Consider enlisting a well-connected travel agent, suggests Carolyn Spencer Brown, editor of the Cruise Critic website. "Just about the sky's the limit," she says, "as long as you remember to get back to the ship on time."

NEED HELP?

Editor at Large  
Christopher Elliott is our consumer advocate and author of *How to Be the World's Smartest Traveler* (National Geographic Books).

REACH CHRIS:

E-mail  
elliott@ngs.org

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**Q.** Is it possible to avoid air delays? Some delays are unavoidable, like those caused by a mechanical failure. You can stay ahead of others to a certain extent. FiveThirtyEight.com's new delay predictor tells you the statistical likelihood of being held up at each airport. For example, the tool recently informed me that flying out of hyper-busy JFK would add 24 minutes to my travel time, but if I flew out of Long Island MacArthur Airport in Islip, the delay would be only 16 minutes. More tips: Get on the first flight of the day, which uses a plane that's parked at the gate overnight. Book a nonstop flight, which typically steers clear of the busiest airports, and check its on-time rating at FlightStats.com. Wiser yet, allot extra time so a delay won't derail your plans.



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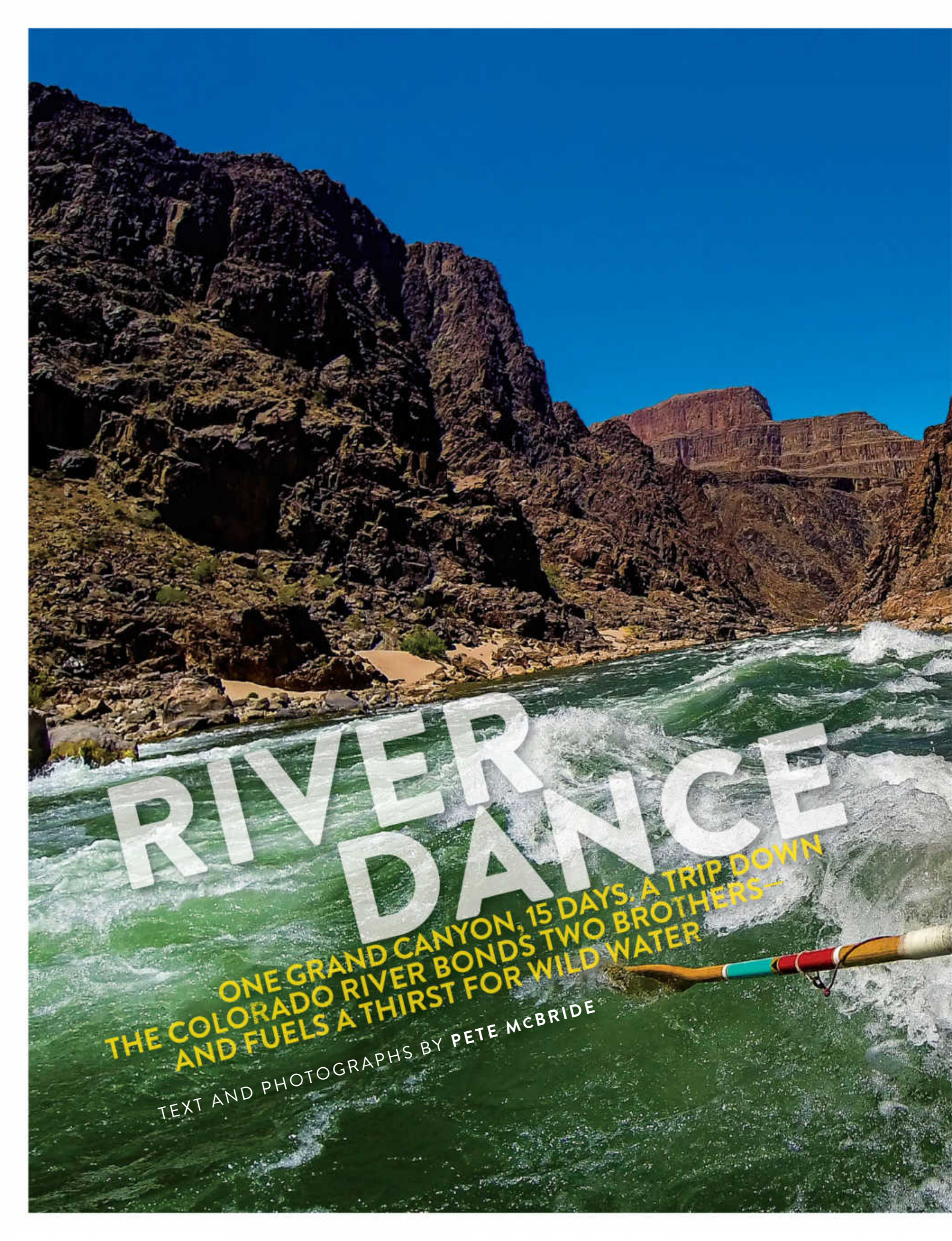
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# RIVER DANCE

ONE GRAND CANYON, 15 DAYS, A TRIP DOWN  
THE COLORADO RIVER BONDS TWO BROTHERS—  
AND FUELS A THIRST FOR WILD WATER

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETE MCBRIDE



Keen instincts and  
Lars Haarr's deft oar  
strokes guide a dory  
down the churning  
Colorado River.





“THE GRAND CANYON IS CARVEN DEEP BY THE MASTER HAND; IT IS THE GULF OF SILENCE,  
WIDENED IN THE DESERT; IT IS ALL TIME INSCRIBING THE NAKED ROCK; IT IS THE BOOK OF EARTH.”

DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE, *THE ROAD OF A NATURALIST*, 1941

## HUNCHED IN A DORY

dropping into one of the most storied rapids in the world’s grandest canyon, I’m surprised by all that I hear. The crash of water echoes off the granite walls around me, but so do much smaller noises: the creak of the boat’s wood hull, the squeak of the oars, the call of a nearby canyon wren. Maybe the adrenaline crashing through my veins has honed my senses, or maybe it’s sleeping on the banks of the Colorado River under a silent spray of stars. Whatever, everything has become hauntingly loud. ¶ I’m on the 11th day of a 15-day boat trip down the Grand Canyon with family members, and we’re about to hit Lava Falls—an experience our boatman just described as





“getting tossed down a flight of stairs while someone fires a river hose at you.” I’m seriously questioning the wisdom of our having opted for dories, low-slung boats that in smooth water bob like corks—but in rapids can flip like bottle caps. My hands clutch the gunwales of the dory I’m in, the *Okeechobee*. During its 35 years of dancing the Colorado through this mile-deep Arizona canyon, the *Okeechobee* has been rebuilt at least five times.

Sitting in the refurbished bow with me is my older brother, Johnno, an action addict—he coached the U.S. Olympic ski team—who craves excitement. Right now, though, I see nervousness in his eyes. Checking that our life jackets are snug and our helmets more snug, we exchange a brotherly look.

“You got it, Moqui!” Johnno yells to our veteran boatman, working the oars behind us. “You’re king of the world!” It’s a moniker Moqui—also called Mark Johnson—earned decades ago. Right now the king is laser-focused on the rage of “lava” ahead of us. We drop down a glassy green tongue and a wave curls over us, blasting us. We whoop—and our boat stalls just long enough to push us sideways. Fortunately, Moqui is known for his explosive “Moqui strokes,” fierce oar pulls that always save him from the river’s jaws. He will correct our crooked line. But we keep veering left. I look back at our captain: He mans the only set of oars controlling our boat. What I see makes me shudder. His left hand claws the air, empty; no oar is in sight. White water thunders around us. Plan A, run right of the river’s center, is gone with the oar. We’re left with plan B—survival.

MY BROTHER AND I grew up on the Colorado River, swimming and fishing in it in summer, skiing in winter on the snows that feed its headwaters. Six years ago, I traced the Colorado from its source in the Rockies to its delta by the Gulf of California for my book, *The Colorado River: Flowing Through Conflict*, and saw the river being sucked dry by drought and population growth. The Colorado no longer reaches the Gulf; too many straws drain the drink. My shock at the transformation of this magnificent lifeline, one of the world’s hardest-working rivers and, some say, the most loved and litigated, sparked a passion to know and protect it. It’s my river capture, a geology term for when a waterway erodes faster

**Brothers in arms (left), the author and his sibling Johnno hang tight through Lava Falls, one of the rapids that amp up a Grand Canyon river ride. A hiker (above) sticks to firmer canyon ground, on foot.**

than another, eventually capturing the flow from the neighboring drainage—just as the Colorado River has been capturing me.

So, on a May morning, five dories and three baggage rafts carrying our group and other river runners set off from Lees Ferry, the staging area for most Colorado River expeditions. The Glen Canyon Dam rises a few miles upstream; though we don’t see it, its impact is immediate. Unnaturally clear water pools around us, its red sediment—that memory of the Rockies—filtered by the dam. “Too thick to drink and too thin to plough” described this river before human engineering transformed its flow from a silt-rich red into an emerald snake. It’ll be our trail,



our drinking water, our home, and our evening lullaby for the next two weeks and 277 miles of wilderness.

Our riverine caravan bobs downstream through oxbows within the polished limestone walls of Marble Canyon, which is considered the unofficial gateway to the Grand Canyon. Johnno, settling into our dory nicely, seems to have taken my rationale for choosing a wooden craft to heart.

“Why dories?” he had asked when I first proposed a trip to him and his wife, Sunni. “Why not a safer rubber raft?”

“If you’re about to drive down a country road on a warm spring day,” I answered, “what would you choose—a crowded



bus with few stops, a roomier but sluggish truck, or a vintage sports car? Where you gain safety and time, you give up style, and where you gain cool, you give up practicality. Dories score high on cool, medium on practicality—and safety depends largely on the individual holding the oars.”

Dories also, I’d added, convey a sense of what John Wesley Powell experienced on his 1869 Colorado River journey, when he became the first to navigate the uncharted waterway in a wooden boat—and was one of the first to begin mapping it.

“What falls there are, we know not,” Powell would write up in his journal. “What rocks beset the channel, we know not; what walls rise over the river, we know not.” Although the river today is fully mapped, I’m starting to know just how he felt.

As we descend into the canyon’s 40 layers of sedimentary rock, each layer a signature of time, I pretend to recall details I learned in geology class. The truth, however, is that the place has too many dates, layers, and layer names—Kaibab, Supai—for me to keep track of. The Grand Canyon just overwhelms with its scale, its kaleidoscope of colors, its sheer physicality, shrinking everything in you but your soul.

Thankfully, our guides prove to be walking encyclopedias. Of the five, three earned “legend” status with O.A.R.S., the outfitter, which has run river trips since 1969. One of them, guide Andre Potochnik, packs a Ph.D. in geology and has served on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s recreation commission, which addresses the diverse interests that depend on the Colorado. The second largest producer of hydroelectric juice in the U.S., the bureau controls the flow in Grand Canyon. Some see hydroelectricity as the river’s economic engine. Others see a free-flowing river, which would attract billions of tourist dollars, as the economic driver. After 13 years on the commission, Potochnik went from “dams must go” to a more centrist view.

“There was room to work with the bureau, so I softened my approach.” On our trip he’ll talk rock theory until the river, or the beer, runs dry. These days, the beer may outlast the river.

The canyon’s ecology and the constellations in the canyon’s starry amphitheater, still wonderfully free of light pollution, will be the purview of guide Lars Haarr. Then there is trip leader Eric Sjoden, a wiry, soft-voiced grandfather from Montana, who seems to speak another, water-defined language. The bigger the waves, the less he rows, as if willing his boat around rocks.

The feistiest guide will be the sole woman, Chelsea Arndt, one of a growing cadre of female guides on the Colorado. Raised in Wyoming, she came to the canyon right after college and got into guiding literally by accident, when she, with no experience, had to take over for an injured guide. “It was messy, but I figured it out,” she says in her slow Wyoming drawl.

We 18 passengers take turns in each guide’s boat, so one day my rat pack—me, my friend Nicole, John, and Sunni—rides in Arndt’s *Roaring Springs*. Dories carry their own mystique in the river running world. Generally built with some mix of foam,

plywood, and fiberglass, they’d seem no match for the toothy rocks in many of the rapids.

“Dories,” says Arndt “are fun, fast, and at times wild. When I guide one, it commands my full attention. I need to know exactly where the boat can and can’t go, without scratching its paint.”

Every dory guide can recall collisions and flips. An expedition without any? “We call that a golden run.” Each of us hopes, of course, for a golden run. Except my brother, who keeps asking, “When do we tackle bigger rapid action?” Soon, I tell him, soon.

I don’t add he’s late for the monstrous rapids John Wesley Powell fought, that the river is a shadow of its former self. In 1983, a record Colorado snow-pack melted and flooded Lake Powell, threatening the Glen Canyon Dam. Desperate to save it, dam operators opened its bypass gates, releasing a maelstrom of 100,000 cubic feet of water per second (cfs). Today, an average river trip sees water levels between 8,000 and 15,000 cfs.



**River whisperer:** Veteran dory guide Eric Sjoden rests up for the next round of white-water adventure. Deer Creek Falls (right) adds touches of greenery to stony Grand Canyon.

“GOOOD MOOORNING Graand Caaaaanyon! Coffee and tea in aisle seven!” booms Haarr, our

tattooed boatman, on day three. It’s about 5 a.m.—I think. My watch is lost in my dry bag, so my clock has aligned to river time: sunrise, sunset, and lunch, when my stomach growls.

Every morning the river is low, leaving our boats high on the beach. By midmorning it starts swelling, a dam-fed hydroelectric curve. As temperatures spike in Phoenix, air conditioning demand rises, requiring more power. Dam operators release more water. (Weekend need typically falls; offices are closed.)

In 1540, when this river ran wild, a Spaniard, Garcia Lopez de Cárdenas, peered out from the canyon’s south rim, the first European to lay eyes on this drainage big enough to contain his homeland’s Basque Mountains. I consider this as we hike up a side canyon one afternoon to the confluence of the Little









As twilight falls,  
boaters gather  
around a campfire  
near Marble  
Canyon. Nights  
(right) bring cool  
temperatures—  
and the warmth  
of shared stories.







Colorado River and larger Colorado. The Little Colorado, rich with calcium carbonate, flows a fluorescent blue. The confluence is a refuge for the humpback chub, one of four endangered fish species here struggling with both the cool water created by the dam and proliferating non-native fish species such as trout.

A recent development may add to the challenges facing this ancient ecosystem. A proposed 1.4-mile tramway, the “Grand Canyon Escalade,” would transport some 10,000 visitors a day down to the merge of the two rivers. Hotels, shops, and other businesses would join it on the canyon rim. Eleven native tribes live around Grand Canyon National Park; many consider this river confluence sacred and oppose development. Others argue the tramway is a needed economic boost for the Navajo.

“Can you imagine thousands of people here?” Potochnik asks as we row past the confluence. We shake our heads.

DAY FIVE, RIVER MILE 68, and what has been a narrow-walled canyon suddenly yawns open. For the first time we see both the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon, looming some 5,000 feet above us. I discern what look like stone structures maybe 800 feet up and can’t resist a quick exploratory hike.

Forty-five minutes later, I find Native American ruins that have survived 900 years of storms and other natural events. Ancient Puebloans once inhabited much of the canyon—until they left it for unknown reasons (some speculate it was to escape drought conditions). As I ponder trying to farm this arid landscape, my attention gets lost in the immense silence.

Day seven dawns with sunlight filling the canyon. Everything looks serene. Then I hear, “Big punchy white water today.” Moqui appears wearing pajamas under his shorts.

“Planning on napping later?” I ask.

“On big water days I bust out the jammies,” he explains, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

We gather for a refresher safety talk; as guide Sjoden wryly notes, “We’re heading into some deep schist.” A few river miles downstream, a geological unconformity, or break in the sediment, pushed 1.6-billion-year-old granite schist to the surface, creating white-water fun—or “deep schist” if you screw up.

“Stay in your boat to help keep it upright,” Sjoden advises. “If you spill out, keep your feet angled downstream and hang on to the dory so it won’t flip. If it flips, we’ll try to reflip it.”

*Continued on page 84*

**Stretches of calm water allow Colorado River expeditioners to kick back and drink in the sheer grandeur of Grand Canyon National Park.**





A man with a backpack is crossing a river. He is shirtless and wearing red athletic briefs. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The river is flowing over rocks, creating white water. The background shows a lush, green forest.

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# Colorado River

FLOWING 1,450 MILES through the American West and northwest Mexico before ending at the Gulf of California, the Colorado River is the Southwest's principal waterway. Its most scenic stretch cuts through—and helped shape—the Grand Canyon.

## RUNNING THE RIVER

Numerous outfitters guide float trips through Grand Canyon National Park. The author went with **O.A.R.S.**, one of the first outfitters granted a license to operate trips on this stretch of the river. Other concessionaires include **Arizona River Runners**, **Grand Canyon Expeditions**, and **Grand Canyon Discovery**. For a full list of river outfitters, see the park's website, [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca).

## WHAT TO KNOW

River trips run from April through October. Boaters in spring and fall should prepare for variable weather, with snow and high winds possible; temperatures range from the 50s into the 80s F. Summers bring an increase in

temperatures—105 degrees F in the canyon isn't uncommon—and in recreational vessels, which can mean sharing space. River runners interested in extending a visit should consider staying at one of the six lodges in the park, including the 110-year-old **El Tovar**, on the canyon's South Rim.

## PARK ATTRACTIONS

The Grand Canyon's **North** and **South Rims**, which include visitors centers, eateries, and lodging, serve as the gateways to many of the park's sites. Highlights include hikes of the easy **Rim Trails**; more challenging hikes that descend from the rims toward the canyon floor on such trails as **Bright Angel**, **South Kaibab**, and **North Kaibab**; and popular



**mule rides** along both rims or into the canyon (fee; reservations recommended). Two museums—the **Yavapai Museum of Geology** and the **Tusayan Museum**—illuminate the canyon's complex geology and its Pueblo Indian history. Just outside the Tusayan Museum you'll find the **Tusayan Ruin**, an 800-year-old remnant of an ancestral Pueblo settlement.

## WHAT TO READ

*The Emerald Mile:*  
*The Epic Story of the*

*Fastest Ride in History Through the Heart of the Grand Canyon*, by Kevin Fedarko (2013), recounts the fastest boat journey down the Colorado River, by three men in 1983 during extraordinary flood conditions. *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*, by historian and novelist Wallace Stegner (1954), focuses on Powell's challenging expeditions and scientific work in the West. Read Powell's account of the first ever

river expedition through the Grand Canyon in *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*, issued as a Penguin Classic in 2003.

## ATLAS



**Grand Canyon National Park** is home to five of the seven life zones of North America, comparable to traveling from Canada to Mexico.

An estimated one thousand cave formations honeycomb the Grand Canyon.

The 89 mammal species in the park include the Kaibab squirrel, whose only habitat is the Kaibab Plateau. Also native: the short-horned lizard, which squirts blood from its eyes if threatened.



## HOW DID HE DO THAT?

## CAMERA IN ACTION

"Running a rapid, with waves smashing your boat, offers great action shots," says author/photographer Pete McBride. "They're hard to get with a camera in waterproof housing, which is heavy and needs at least one hand to operate, so I brought a GoPro, which I mounted on the bow and set to take shots in bursts or on a timer, capturing the moment. The beauty of an action camera is its portability, small size, and range of mounts and brackets, which let a photographer try new angles and perspectives."



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TOMASZ FURMANEK  
Photo by: Tomasz Furmanek

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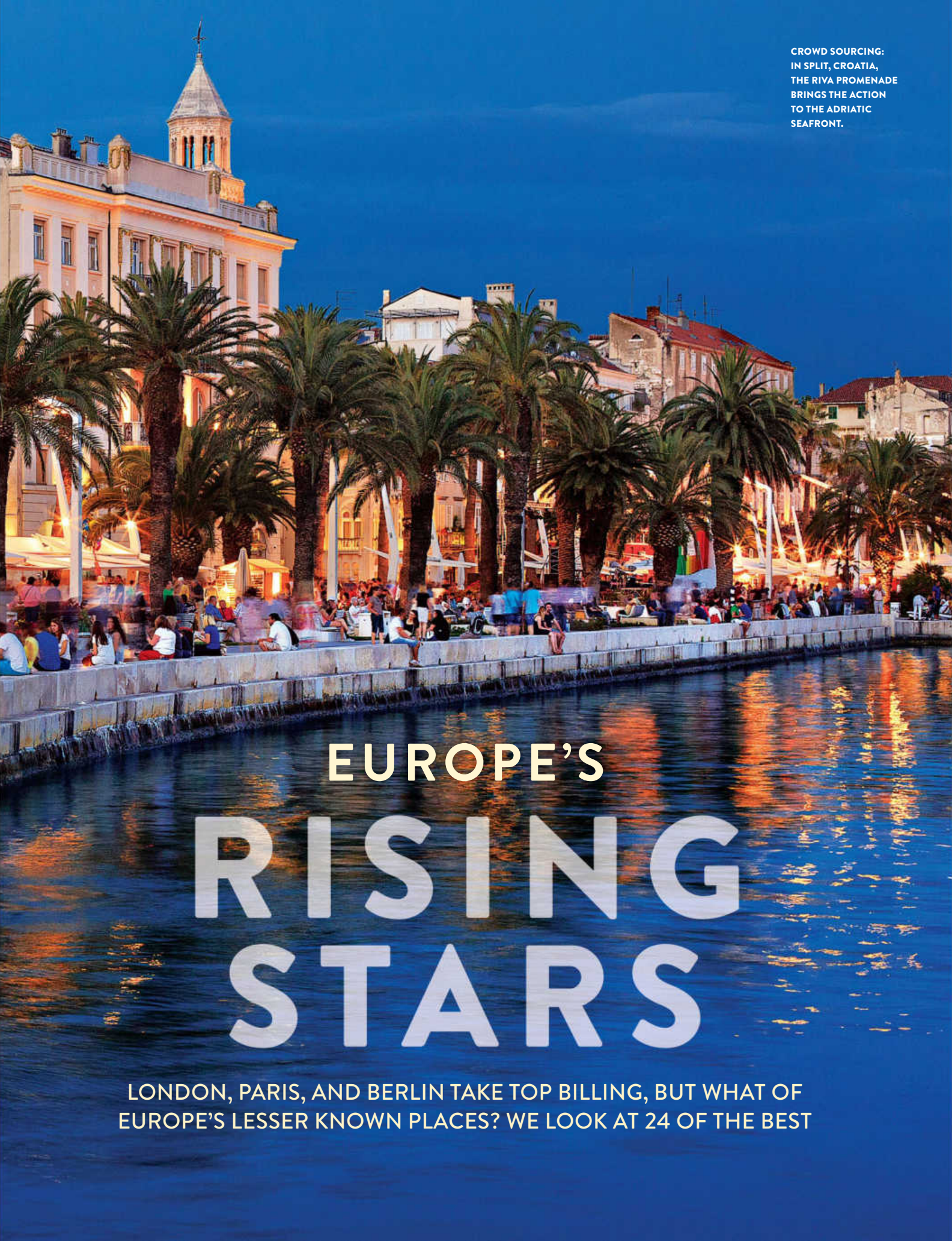
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TO THE ADRIATIC  
SEAFRONT.

# EUROPE'S RISING STARS

LONDON, PARIS, AND BERLIN TAKE TOP BILLING, BUT WHAT OF  
EUROPE'S LESSER KNOWN PLACES? WE LOOK AT 24 OF THE BEST



# 1

MUNICH, GERMANY

## Break Out Your Dirndl

FOR ALL ITS PROGRESSIVE THINKING, Munich tends to look to the past when it comes to lifestyle. The capital of meat-eating, beer-swilling Bavaria is a place where dinner takes the shape of *knödel* dumplings and pig's trotters, washed down with local beers by the liter. And although the residents ham it up for Oktoberfest, you'll catch them breaking out the *trachten*—as they call their traditional outfits—for special occasions year-round.

It's all done with such a sense of *gemütlichkeit* (neighborly friendliness) that there's nothing cloying about Munich—and nothing fake about it, either. Some of the wood-paneled, hangar-like beer halls date back 200 years, and as the days grow warmer, their expansive beer gardens become the meeting places of choice.

**BEST FOR:** Traditions **MAIN EVENT:** Starkbierzeit, or "strong beer time," is Munich's lesser known but more authentic spring beer extravaganza. It runs annually two weeks near Lent. **ALSO TRY:** Salzburg, Austria, possibly the only other city in the world where lederhosen are considered acceptable formal attire and apple strudel is widely sold

*This feature is adapted from an article that originally ran in our U.K. edition, National Geographic Traveller. With reporting by Mark Baker, Julia Buckley, Stuart Forster, Suzanne King, Margaret Loftus, Chris Moss, Pol Ó Conghaile, Mark C. O'Flaherty, and Amanda Ruggeri.*

YES, IT'S TOURISTY,  
BUT MUNICH'S  
HÖFBRÄUHAUS PILES  
ON THE CHARM—AND  
THE LITERS OF BEER.







JENS SCHWARZ/LAIF/REDUX (BEER HALL), CUBO IMAGES/SUPERSTOCK (STATUE), SIME/ESTOCK PHOTO (SEAFRONT, OPENING PAGES)



A FINE FINNISH FIGURE, IN TAMPERE

## 2

TAMPERE, FINLAND

### HOTTEST WHEN IT'S COLD

INDUSTRIALIZATION HELPED Tampere, once nicknamed “the Manchester of Finland,” grow into Finland’s second largest urban area, now a 90-minute train ride northwest of Helsinki. The cotton mills closed in the 1990s, and offices, restaurants, and cultural attractions, such as the Finnish Labour Museum, moved in. The Spy Museum here displays Cold War curiosities: miniature cameras and cunningly disguised weapons.

Summer draws out locals for canoeing, swimming, and hiking, but winter may be the time to experience the city at its natural best. Strap on a pair of saw-toothed snowshoes for a walk on frozen Lake Näsijärvi. Try your hand at ice fishing. Steam yourself at a pinewood sauna on Lake Pyhäjärvi, then dare winter swimming at a section of the lake kept ice free.

**BEST FOR:** Outdoor winter fun  
**MUST-SEE MUSEUM:** Tampere Lenin Museum, the building in which Lenin and Stalin first met, in 1905  
**ALSO TRY:** Oulu, Finland, the self-styled “capital of northern Scandinavia,” ideal for summer canoe tours





**MERRY-GO-ROUND  
COAT RACK AT MUSEUM  
BOIJMANS, ROTTERDAM**

## ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

# That New Design Trend? It Started Here

**3** AFTER BEING NEARLY wiped off the map by the Luftwaffe in World War II, Rotterdam bounced back with a creative confidence few European cities can match. You see it in the Erasmus Bridge, which looks like a giant modernist swan, and in Piet Blom's iconic cube houses—you can visit Number 70, but the rest remain occupied low-cost homes. That innovative spirit also reveals itself in the alien-looking Shipping and Transport College, best seen from a water taxi as you speed along the Nieuwe Maas tributary. Other beloved old buildings enjoy a new lease on life, such as the Hotel New York, once headquarters of the Holland America Line. Its neighbors include Norman Foster's glistening World Port Center.

In one of the city's oldest districts, find the new Westelijk

Handelsterrein, a glass-roofed arcade with some of the finest galleries, shops, and bars in Rotterdam. The Boijmans Museum here collects a treasure trove of contemporary art and design.

As the sun begins to set, take a walk across the Erasmus Bridge toward Renzo Piano's KPN Telecom Office Tower and see it spring to life—its facade animated by a grid of 896 24-volt lights dancing in glittering patterns. Like Blom's skewed houses, this exemplifies Rotterdam design at its best—bold, dazzling, and with a crackling sense of humor.

**BEST FOR:** Cutting-edge contemporary design and architecture **MAIN EVENT:** International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam opens May 2016 in the Rem Koolhaas-designed Kunsthall. **ALSO TRY:** Copenhagen, Denmark, with its wealth of noteworthy modern buildings

### TRAVEL BY PLANE

Zippering around Europe on planes was uncommon for the budget traveler before **RYANAIR** and **EASYJET** debuted their no-frills flights in the late 1990s. Today, flying

within the Continent can be cheaper than taking the train, thanks to the slew of start-ups and legacy airlines that have riffed on the low-cost model. Most specialize in regional short hauls, such as the Barcelona-based

**VUELING**, which flies throughout Spain and to major cities like Brussels and Rome, and **HOP!**, a subsidiary of Air France connecting smaller cities within France, including Nantes and Lille, to the rest of Europe.

ELIAN SOWERS





## NEW EUROPE DECODER

# Rock Around the Eastern Bloc

*Once locked behind the Iron Curtain, these five countries offer fresh takes on the Old World*

### ALBANIA

#### ADVENTURE CENTRAL

**4** Not long ago the very model of seclusion, Albania these days tops the list for adventure-seekers and those looking to go off the beaten track. Trekkers head north of the energetic capital, Tirana, to hike the rugged “Accursed Mountains.” To the south, the curvy coastal road from Vlorë to Sarandë unspools between steep mountain passes and the blue Adriatic Sea.

### LITHUANIA

#### NATURE PLAYGROUND

**5** The lures of Lithuania—its pristine forests and lakes, and a long, majestic strip of sand dunes along the Baltic—don’t immediately jump out. Simona Dambauskas, a fashion-accessories designer, says local life revolves around simple pleasures such as strolling through capital Vilnius’s baroque cityscape or picking mushrooms in the woods. Lithuania adopted the euro in January.

### MOLDOVA

#### GREAT WINE COUNTRY

**6** Europe’s least visited country (about 12,000 visitors per year) produces some of Europe’s best wines east of Italy. Popular varietals like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot thrive in the sunny south, but look out for local grapes such as crisp red Rara Neagră or light white Fetească Albă. Stop by old wineries such as Mileștii Mici and Cricova, where wine is stored in vast limestone cellars.

### SERBIA

#### CAFFEINATED CULTURE

**7** Serbia’s rebellious spirit hasn’t always served it well, but nowadays the country is aiming for European Union membership. The capital, Belgrade, exudes big-city glam, and clubs and coffee bars are the best in the Balkans. Fun-loving Strahinjića Bana street enlivens the trendy Dorćol quarter. More scenic and lower key: the Zemun waterfront, on the opposite riverbank from Belgrade.

### SLOVENIA

#### BEAUTY QUEEN

**8** From the old Venetian port of Piran, with its terracotta roofs, to the blue-green waters of the Soča River, to the shores of Lake Bled backdropped by the snowcapped Alps, tiny Slovenia may well be Europe’s prettiest place. Bled-based Domen Kalajžič says his country is simply blessed with natural beauty: “Get lost in the great outdoors, and you’ll find the way back to happy spirits.”





# 9

ANTWERP, BELGIUM

## WHEN FASHION MET CHOCOLATE

A WELCOME understatement infuses the northern Belgian city of Antwerp, though it has plenty to shout about: its Gothic cathedral; the ornate guild houses lining the Grote Markt; and the Museum Plantin-Moretus, home to the world's oldest printing presses.

Even those who don't enjoy clothes shopping might have a change of heart here, where one-off boutiques such as glove purveyor Huis A. Boon line cobblestoned streets and where grand designer stores—including those of local fashion stars Dries Van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester—display a refreshing lack of attitude.

In Antwerp, it pays to ditch the sightseeing checklist and just wander. Walk north of the center to explore the regenerating docklands area of Eilandje; head south to reach Zuid, with its Parisian-style café culture.

Whichever way you go, there will be chocolate. Chocolatier Burie makes palaces out of the sweet stuff for its famously creative window displays. And Del Rey, near the train station, produces a not-as-innocent-as-they-sound line of "chocolate milks" spiked with liqueurs, like Grand Marnier.

**BEST FOR:** Clothes, culture, and confectionery **MUST-SEE**

**MUSEUM:** The Red Star Line Museum tells the story of the thousands who set sail here for the New World. **ALSO TRY:** Brugge, brimming with Belgian culture and chocolate

PUCKER UP: AT THE CHOCOLATE LINE SHOP IN ANTWERP, CHOCOLATE LIPSTICK REMAINS A BEST SELLER.







CHRISTIAN KERBER/LAIF/REDUX (WOMAN), DOUG PEARSON/AWL IMAGES (LANDSCAPE), KEN SOICLUNA/AWL IMAGES (STATUE)

# 10

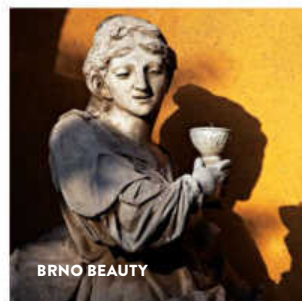
SPLIT, CROATIA

## The Emperor's New Groove

MANY EUROPEAN CITIES claim Roman ruins, but a town that has inhabited, reworked, and centered itself around those ruins as the centuries roll by is—outside Rome itself—something rather special. Perched on a stocky peninsula jutting out from Croatia's mainland, Split came to prominence thanks to the emperor Diocletian, who built an enormous palace here as his retirement project. Bars, shops, and even hotels now flank the palace's peristyle, or central courtyard, its tall archways and symmetrical lines forming the old town's most spectacular square.

Split hasn't roped off Diocletian's settlement; rather, it's built into and around it. The 13th-century cathedral incorporates the emperor's mausoleum, while the Roman temple of Jupiter is now a baptistery, its exquisitely carved Romanesque font guarded by a headless sphinx. The famous Riva seafront promenade begins outside the palace walls. Completed in A.D. 305, the palace took Diocletian ten years to build. But not even the most egomaniacal of Roman emperors could have imagined that, 1,700 years later, it would still be center stage.

**BEST FOR:** Living history **MAIN EVENT:** Split Summer Festival, with superlative theater, music, and dance in venues around town, including the palace **ALSO TRY:** Thessaloniki, Greece, with its historic Byzantine and Ottoman architecture



# 11

BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC

## CHEAP TRICKS BEYOND PRAGUE

IT'S ALMOST COMPLETELY overshadowed by big sibling Prague, but that's no fault of Brno, the Czech Republic's captivating second city, which combines Renaissance, baroque, and modern architecture with vibrant nightlife at affordable prices.

Hearty traditional meals hover around \$4, while dinner in a white-tablecloth establishment will rarely take you over \$30. The all-important price of beer? About \$1.50.

**BEST FOR:** A budget break

**MAIN EVENT:** The annual spring Jazz Fest, with performers from all over Europe and the U.S.

**ALSO TRY:** Krakow, Poland, a second city as enticing as its capital sibling







WHEN IN ROME

# Inside the Pope's Vatican

**12** FOR ONE WEEK this September, Pope Francis will trade umbrella pines and St. Peter's Basilica for New York skyscrapers and D.C.'s Capitol dome. But although Catholics look forward to his trip to the U.S., a Roman holiday to the Vatican remains the best way to get close to the pope.

**SECRET GARDEN** The Vatican's 800-year-old gardens—filled with classical statues, exotic flowers, and graceful fountains—are now open for tours (booked through the Vatican website). Don't miss the miniature copy of the Lourdes Basilica and Grotto, given to the pope by French Catholics in 1905.

**YOUR OWN SISTINE CHAPEL** The home of the papal enclave is as famed for crowds as it is for Michelangelo's frescoes. Luckily, some tour companies, like Dark Rome and Walks of Italy, can bump you to the front of the line to enter the chapel, while others, including Italy With Us, offer an intimate evening tour.

**PAPAL GELATO** During his 26-year papacy, Pope John Paul II couldn't resist the temptation of gelato from Rome institution Giolitti. The shop regularly delivered his favorite flavor—marron glacé (candied chestnuts)—directly to the Vatican.

**TAILOR MADE** Six generations of the Gammarelli family have outfitted bishops, cardinals, and at least six popes. Even if you don't need a cassock measured, stop at the 141-year-old shop, located near the Pantheon, just to admire its

sumptuous vestments—or to scoop up church fashion for the layman: the shop's famed knee-high socks in cardinal red or bishop purple.

**PICTURE PERFECT** For the quirkiest photo op of St. Peter's, leave Vatican City for the Aventine Hill headquarters of the Order of Malta. Peek through the entry door keyhole to see the perfectly framed dome, taking in three sovereign states (the Order, Italy, and Vatican City) in one glance.

**SPOT THE POPE** You don't need to be Catholic for a papal audience. Anyone can apply for (free) tickets for his general

audience, held Wednesday mornings at St. Peter's (in summer at Castel Gandolfo), by writing to the Prefecture of the Papal Household. No tickets? Head to St. Peter's Square on Sunday at noon for a glimpse of the pope instead; he gives a blessing from his residence window.

**PRATI'S NEW EATS** The Prati neighborhood just beyond the Vatican walls has upped its culinary game. Recent arrivals include Romeo (with a menu boasting everything from rigatoni carbonara to a hamburger with fontina cheese and apricot chutney), *gelateria* Fatamorgana, and a bakery from Rome's beloved bread master, Gabriele Bonci, which also serves pizza by the slice.

**MICHELANGELO WHO?** Sixty years before Michelangelo painted the Sistine ceiling, 15th-century genius Fra Angelico

decorated Pope Nicholas V's private chapel with stunning frescoes. A deeply devout friar later beatified by Pope John Paul II, Fra Angelico was also an artist of extraordinary sensitivity and storytelling ability, as shown in his frescoes here from the lives of St. Lawrence and St. Stephen.

**VERONICA'S VEIL** While walking around the baldachin of St. Peter's Basilica, pause before the statue of St. Veronica. The chapel above holds the veil believed to be imprinted with Christ's face; usually under lock and key, Veronica's veil is displayed to the faithful during vespers on Palm Sunday from the small balcony in front of the chapel.

**AN UNCONVENTIONAL STAY** Located on Rome's loveliest square, Piazza Farnese, the 15th-century Casa di Santa Brigida is a convent with simple guest rooms with parqueted floors and antique furniture. You're even welcome to join the Brigidine sisters for meals and services, which include daily Mass at 7:30 a.m.—or, if you'd rather, you can head up to the rooftop at 4 p.m. to sip wine and listen to the sisters singing vespers below. Make sure to peek at the rooms of the Swedish St. Bridget herself, who lived here in the 14th century.



POPE FRANCIS GREETES A CROWD ASSEMBLED FOR HIS WEEKLY AUDIENCE.

## TO READ MORE

Don't miss "Will the Pope Change the Vatican? Or Will the Vatican Change the Pope?" in the August issue of *National Geographic*.

ALBERTO PIZZOLI/GETTY IMAGES (POPE); APERTURE SOUND/SHUTTERSTOCK (ROSARY); OPPOSITE PAGE: IAN COLLINS (BASILICA); ANDREW MEDICHINI/AP IMAGES (MAN); KRISTINA GILL (FOOD); SIME/STOCK PHOTO (FRESCO)





A KEYHOLE VIEW OF  
ST. PETER'S BASILICA



CLERICAL GARMENTS AT  
THE GAMMARELLI SHOP



PIZZA IN THE PRATI  
NEIGHBORHOOD



MICHELANGELO'S "DELPHIC  
SIBYL" AT THE SISTINE CHAPEL





IRON MAN: DOM LUÍS  
BRIDGE, A PORTO ICON,  
SPANS THE DOURO RIVER.





# 13

## PORTO, PORTUGAL A SURPRISE OF A CITY? WE'LL DRINK TO THAT

IT'S THE START of a dazzling sunset in Porto, a sequence that will throw the iron arch of Dom Luís Bridge into silhouette, make the Rio Douro look like treacle, and finally turn the riverside town houses the color of tawny port. Which is appropriate because Portugal's Douro Valley is renowned for its fortified wines—those unique white, ruby, and tawny ports created by arresting the fermentation process with the addition of brandy (which sweetens the results). You can't visit Porto without noticing the warehouses, restaurants, and bars emblazoned with names such as Quinta do Noval, Taylor's, Croft, and Ferreira.

So go ahead and taste the port. It's good. But that's just the beginning.

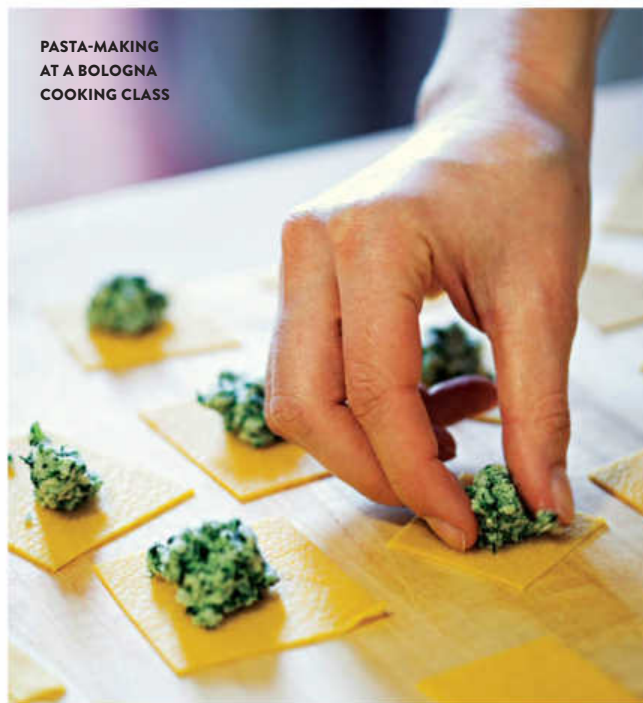
Porto's real thrill lies in the magnificent mash-up of traditional and modern—for example, those brand-name boutiques next to stores selling wax body parts, which are left in churches as pleas for divine intercession.

At the art nouveau Majestic Café, the endless mirrors are starting to age. The clientele read newspapers, keeping one eye on the tourists ogling this belle époque beauty.

If Lisbon is the meal, Porto is the sweet and storied digestif.

**BEST FOR:** All things port. The drink is produced exclusively in the Douro Valley. **MAIN EVENT:** Fireworks-filled Festa de São João (June 23) **ALSO TRY:** Faro, another underrated Portuguese city, with a charming old center

PASTA-MAKING  
AT A BOLOGNA  
COOKING CLASS



MICHELE FALZONE/AWL IMAGES (BRIDGE), CATHERINE STUKHARD/LAIF/REDUX (PASTA)

BOLOGNA, ITALY

## Pass the Tortelloni, *Per Favore*

14 FRIDAY NIGHT IN BOLOGNA, and the central Quadrilatero district is heaving. But it's not the trendy bars or boutiques that have brought what feels like half the city to these ancient streets; the biggest line, spilling out into Via Drapperie, is at delicatessen Salumeria Simoni, where customers are stocking up on great wedges of Parmesan and piles of prosciutto before the weekend can really begin.

Often overlooked by visitors, Bologna magnifies and mixes the best Italian clichés. Historic architecture? Check—these Renaissance palazzi, terra-cotta roofs, and winding streets seem barely changed in centuries. An intrinsic sense of style? Of course—from meticulously kept bars serving frothy cappuccinos to shops selling handmade shoes or designer labels. Friendly service? Absolutely—Bologna has yet to develop tourist fatigue, unlike Rome and Venice.

And great food? Well, there's a reason why Bologna is called *la grassa*, or “the fat one.” All Italy acknowledges: The food here ranks second to none.

**BEST FOR:** The essence of Italy **MUST-SEE MUSEUM:** Palazzo Fava, a medieval villa formerly home to one of Bologna's most prominent families and now hosting top-notch temporary art exhibits **ALSO TRY:** Bergen, Norway, another small-city gem with historic buildings and great views of fjords and mountains





LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

## Got to Get This Into My Life

**15** WITH MORE THAN A LITTLE DOSE of nocturnal naughtiness and a waterfront to rival any in Europe, Liverpool has emerged as one of England's most convivial and cosmopolitan cities.

The Tate Liverpool, in the Albert Dock, allows visitors to ponder art—Jean Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst—without having to do battle with the crowds at the Tates in London. The Merseyside Maritime Museum argues that boats, far more than the Beatles or football, elevated Liverpool to global renown.

The city of about half a million is walkable. The area between the docks and the city center, known as the Baltic Triangle, used to be where all the dock depots clustered—a few shipping agents remain—but has evolved into a creative hot spot, with industrial buildings housing design studios, Internet start-ups, bistros, and the inevitable bike shop.

Have lunch on Hope Street, one of the city's preeminent dining strips. The London Carriage Works serves up locally sourced dishes, such as Liverpool Bay sea bass. Then down a postprandial pint of Strongheart at the Phil (aka Philharmonic Dining Rooms), one of the most beautiful pubs in Britain. The two snugs are ideal for cozy chats.

For something more rock-and-roll, check into the centrally located Hard Days Night hotel, with a lively cocktail bar and pop art in the rooms, or check out funky Parr Street Studios, in the Ropewalks district. Its Studio2 bar is as glamorous as any in town after dark, and the studios are still fully functioning.

**BEST FOR:** Pop culture and pubs with history—Baltic Fleet, Philharmonic Dining Rooms, Ye Cracke, Ye Hole in Ye Wall **MUST-SEE ART:** A working Merseyside ferry painted in “dazzle” camouflage by the godfather of British pop art, Peter Blake, at the Tate **ALSO TRY:** Hull, another great northern English city—too often passed over, but fun and friendly

### TRAVEL BY TRAIN

With stations in the hearts of cities and routes through some of the most scenic landscapes on the Continent, riding the rails in Europe can be both practical and

romantic. Most high-speed international trains, like the **EUROSTAR** and **TGV**, subscribe to airline-style ticketing, which guarantees you a seat. Others sell open tickets that are good anytime; seat reservations are optional

and cost extra. You can buy them last-minute at any train station, but you'll find a better deal if you scout the websites of national railways and U.S. retailers like **RAILEUROPE.COM** a few months in advance.

16

BORDEAUX, FRANCE

## A NEW VANTAGE ON PREMIER VINTAGES

VISITORS ONCE just glanced over this UNESCO-listed city's stately 18th-century squares and harmonious architecture before heading out of town. The Route des Châteaux, running north from Bordeaux's center, winds through the Médoc wine region, past a roster of famed chateaus—Latour, Margaux, Lafite Rothschild.

But Bordeaux now uncorks more reasons to linger in the city. A revitalized riverfront makes an increasingly popular port of call for international river cruise lines such as Uniworld and Viking. The Musée du Vin et du Négoce gives historical context to Bordeaux's winemaking industry and includes a wine tasting in the price of admission. Capping it all off, the daringly swirl-shaped Cité des Civilisations du Vin will be a cultural hub—with interactive exhibits, performances, and food and wine experiences—when it opens on the banks of the Garonne in spring 2016.

**BEST FOR:** All things wine **MAIN EVENT:** The biennial Bordeaux Wine Festival, June 23–26, 2016 **ALSO TRY:** Galway, Ireland's most Irish city, full of fine drinking establishments

HEMIS/AWL IMAGES (NEON), GIANLUCA SANTONI/SHINE/ISTOCK PHOTO (STAIRCASE)





SWIRL AND SIP:  
BOTTLES SPIRAL  
AROUND THE  
STAIRCASE AT  
L'INTENDANT WINE  
SHOP, IN BORDEAUX.





## ISLAND FINDER

# Hopping off the Continent

*Little-known havens to soak up seascapes, fishing villages, and local lore*

### PICO

AZORES/PORTUGAL

**17** The Azores are quietly luring adventurers for hiking, climbing, and biking. Those in the know beeline to Pico, the chain's second largest island, to scale Mount Pico and check out Gruta das Torres, a lava cave that was first explored by scientists in 1990. Above ground, stone walls embrace vineyards.

### ISLE OF MULL

INNER HEBRIDES, SCOTLAND

**18** Don't let the tidy town of Tobermory fool you. Beyond this picturesque facade of brightly colored buildings is a wild expanse of bays, moors, and lochs, waiting to be scaled, hiked, and kayaked. The jewel of the island is Castle Duart, the 800-year-old ancestral home of Clan McLean still owned by the family.

### STREYMOY

FAROE ISLANDS, DENMARK

**19** Even the largest and most populous of the 18 islands that make up the Faroe archipelago can seem otherworldly with its treeless landscape sculpted by glaciers. Adventurous eaters head to Koks, the restaurant in the Hotel Føroyar, lauded for its New Nordic cuisine made with locally sourced ingredients.

### MUHU

ESTONIA

**20** Only 100 miles from techie Tallinn (accessed by an ice road in winter), this Baltic Sea isle is a throwback to the Middle Ages, with charming thatched-roof cottages, a working windmill, and trapezoidal tombstones carved with pagan symbols. Elders still traditionally run fishing villages.

### PANTELLERIA

ITALY

**21** Forget lolling on sandy beaches. There are none on this sun-baked idyll halfway between Sicily and Tunisia. Instead, regular visitors (Giorgio Armani is one) snorkel in secluded coves, soak in hot springs, dine on pasta tossed with tomatoes and herbs, and load up on jars of the island's briny capers.

### KASTELLORIZO

GREECE

**22** As the farthest-flung landmass in the Dodecanese, arid and rocky Kastellorizo doesn't see the influx of travelers that many of its sisters in the archipelago do. Among its charms: the cathedral-like Blue Grotto—a sea cavern accessible only by lying flat on a boat—and ancient castle ruins.

### LOPUD ISLAND

CROATIA

**23** The car-less island in the Elaphiti chain was once the summertime retreat of aristocrats from the mainland. Today it attracts day-trippers heading to its horseshoe-shaped Sunj beach and exploring medieval ruins. Don't miss the art-filled 15th-century Franciscan monastery in the village of Lopud.

### VEGA ISLAND

NORWAY

**24** Bird-watchers have known about this 6,500-island archipelago (and UNESCO World Heritage site) just south of the Arctic Circle, particularly its eider ducks. But buzz is building for hiking and cycling opportunities around fishing villages and fjords of the eponymous main island.

GOLDEN EVENING LIGHT  
WASHES OVER NORWAY'S  
VEGA ISLAND.



FRANCESCO DE MARCO/SHUTTERSTOCK (BIRD), MARIA SWÄRD (SHORELINE)





# ANNUAL GALA 2015



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TRAVELER



Photography by Silk Studio (clockwise from top): Milstein Hall of Ocean Life, American Museum of Natural History; representatives of Costa Rica Tourism Board; Dean Scarborough, Chairman and CEO, Avery Dennison and Tensie Whelan, President, Rainforest Alliance; Marina Silva, Former Minister of Environment of Brazil and Lifetime Achievement Awardee.

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Ex-New Yorker  
Kirill Kourtchikov  
and his Great  
Dane, Loki,  
now live in  
New Orleans'  
revived Marigny  
neighborhood.

# the Come Back

Ten years after tragedy, an undefeated New Orleans  
draws a fresh generation of bon vivants *By Andrew Nelson*









**W**E DANCE EVEN IF THERE'S no radio," is how local columnist Chris Rose described New Orleans' spontaneous, theatrical approach to life. My adopted town is a place where "costume" is a verb and where front porches often serve as stages for comedy or drama.

Ten years ago critics predicted Hurricane Katrina would end New Orleans' long run. Curtains, they said. Yet the city's irrepressible spirit fueled an improbable determination: We dug out. We scooped up. We sawed and hammered, reshingled and restored. The Creole cottages and crawfish; Jackson Square and jambalaya; gris-gris, gumbo, and Galatoire's—are all back. Antoine's Restaurant is even celebrating its 175th birthday. And there's a promising future now, not just a storied past.

More than 34,000 newcomers now call New Orleans home (though the population is still 100,000 less than it was

pre-Katrina). Settled in since the storm, they busy themselves with start-ups and pop-ups or just meeting up in the more than 1,400 restaurants—some 600 more than in 2005. They show little interest in climbing the city's insular, if picaresque, social ladder of white-glove debutantes and white-shoe lawyers. Instead, they've hastened the revival of neighborhoods such as Treme, Mid-City, Irish Channel, and Bywater. They've created new entertainment destinations such as Freret Street.

Together, newbies and natives are penning a different script for New Orleans. Come audition. Bump to brass bands on Frenchmen Street. Trail a Treme second line. Antique on Royal Street. Attend one of 130 annual festivals. Moon over Uptown's amorous architecture. Eat everywhere you go. And too much. Drink a little. Maybe try it neat.

This August we observe Katrina's tenth anniversary. We'll remember those we lost and celebrate what we've become. But I don't think we're going to bed anytime soon. New Orleans turns 300 in 2018. The show's just beginning.



#### AFTER THE DELUGE, A CREATIVE SURGE

*A tree killed by Hurricane Katrina finds second life as carved art (above) in the Bayou St. John neighborhood, near the new Lafitte Greenway, a 2.6-mile pedestrian and bike trail. Opened in 2011, Piety Street Sno-Balls (right) serves a local favorite: sweetened shaved ice.*













#### A PLACE TO PLAY

*Seventeen days after Katrina, President George W. Bush addressed the nation from a deserted Jackson Square. Today the park, fronting St. Louis Cathedral (left), is again a space for frolicking. In the Lower Garden District, Elijah Bradshaw (above) wears many hats at Goorin Bros., hatters since 1895. Want to look like a native? The city's subtropical style demands light fabrics and fashion fearlessness.*

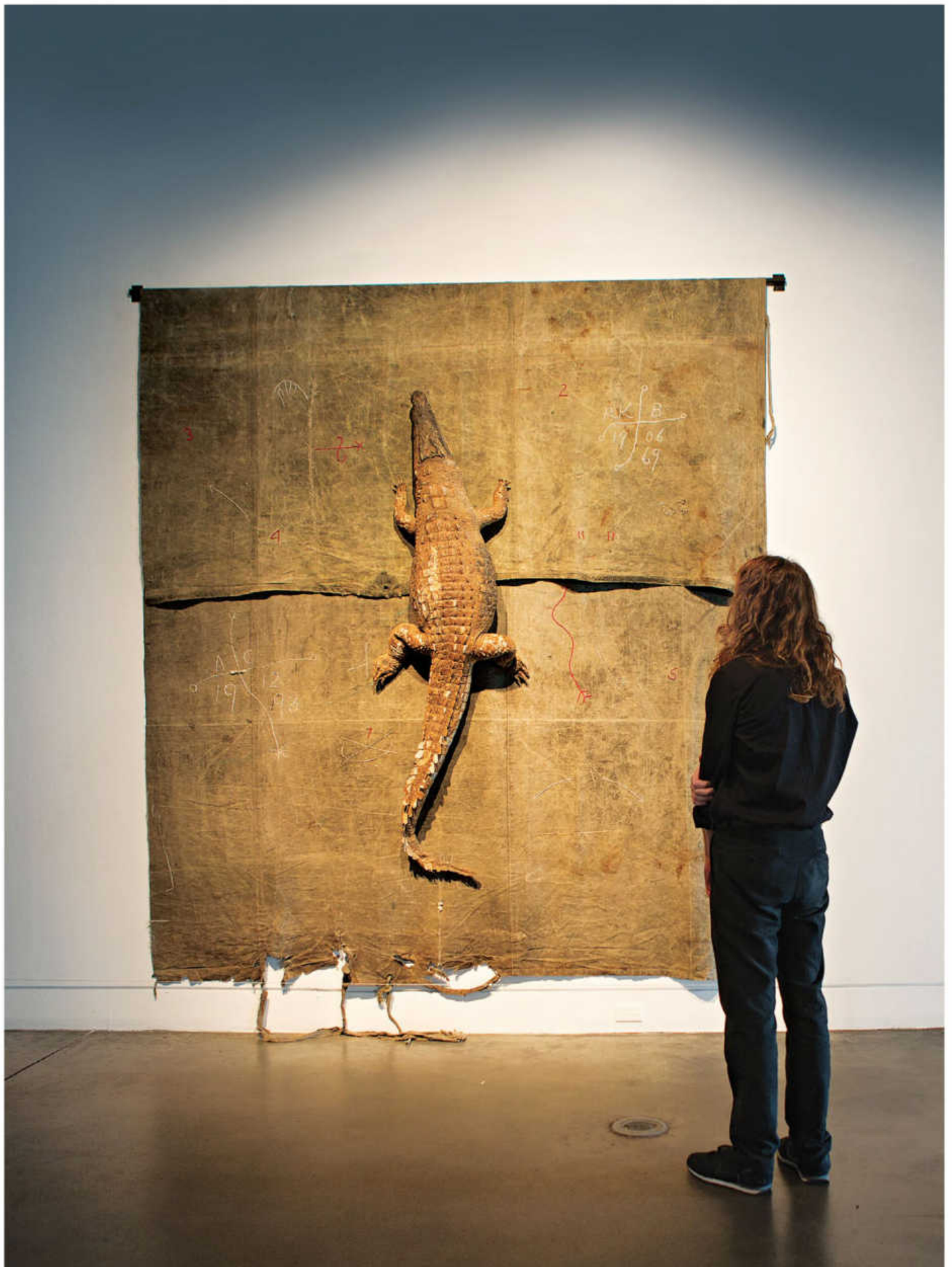




#### INTO THE WILD

*Magazine Street antique store Appartique sells housewares to set eccentric tables. In the Warehouse District, the Contemporary Arts Center (right) displays a work by artist Radcliffe Bailey incorporating a taxidermic crocodile.*





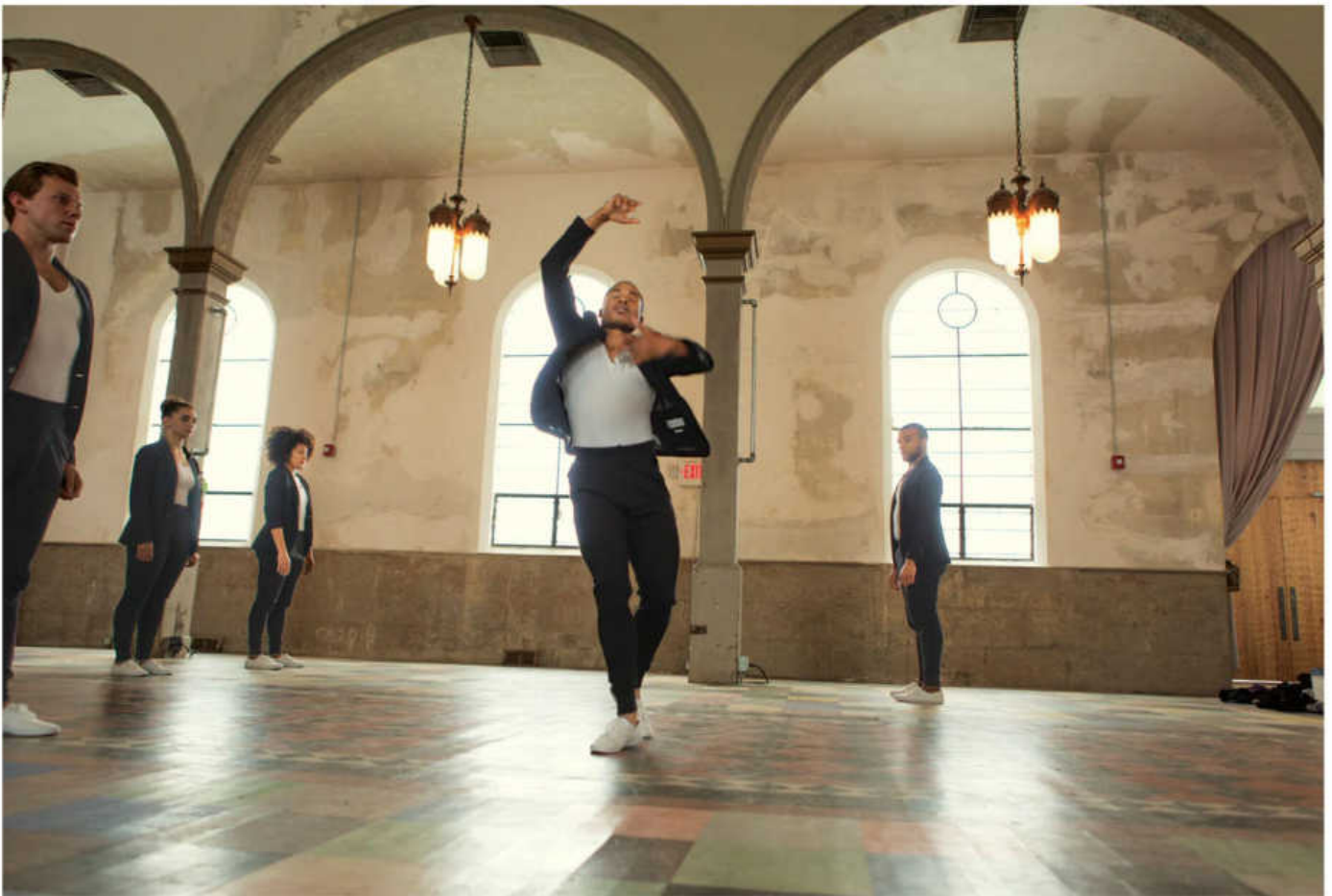






## RETROFITTED HEART

*All weathered walls and distressed wood, Cane and Table (left) specializes in rum cocktails and “rustic colonial” small plates in the French Quarter. A resident dance troupe (below) rehearses at Marigny Opera House, a former church. “Makers wanted to be part of rebuilding,” says entrepreneur Justin Shiels, “to be connected to something larger than themselves.”*



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**ANDREW NELSON** is based in New Orleans, where he teaches journalism and social media at Loyola University. Also a New Orleans resident, **KRIS DAVIDSON** photographed “The Weirdest Country in America” in *Traveler*’s October 2014 issue.



## THE INSIDER

# New Orleans, Louisiana

A DECADE AFTER Hurricane Katrina, a new energy radiates from the Crescent City. The old school endures—the Preservation Hall Jazz Band remains as popular as ever. Now, recent immigrants from Brooklyn to Hollywood add to the mix.

### WHAT TO DO

The Sculpture Garden at the **New Orleans Museum of Art** is the “best free deal in the city,” says Chaney Tullos, a director of the **New Orleans Shakespeare Festival**. He especially likes “Pablo Casals’ Obelisk,” by the artist Arman. Tullos’s own group

stages several plays each summer. “New Orleanians, especially young ones, are much more open to Shakespeare because the city is overflowing with art,” he says. “Art, of all kinds, is the blood of this city.”

The **National WWII Museum** (for which the author once worked)

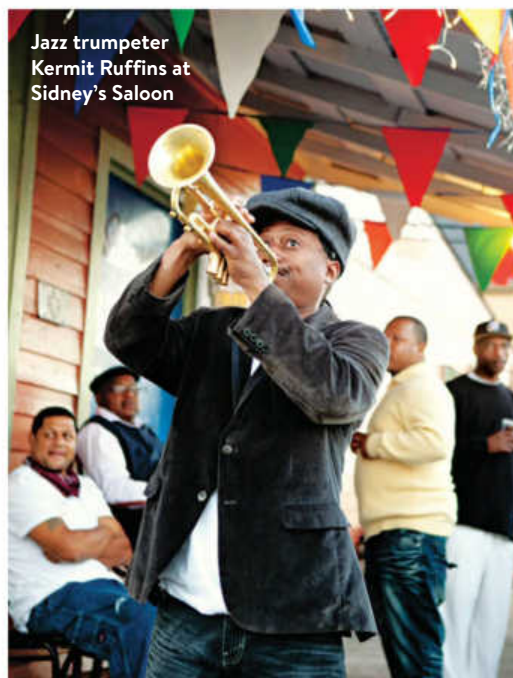
deploys digital graphics, hanging fighter planes, and WWII-veteran docents to tell its story. A new exhibit documenting the war in the Pacific, from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay, opens this December.

The **Southern Food and Beverage Museum** displays menus, utensils, and foodstuffs in exhibits exploring the distinct culinary history and influences of the American South. The institution established a beachhead last year in the rapidly gentrifying section of Central City along Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard and stands across the street from the recently opened **Jazz Market** performance space.

### WHERE TO EAT

From Cajun to contemporary, new restaurants flourish in the revived city. **Red’s Chinese** serves ginger scallion noodles and kung pao pastrami. Israeli hummus and pita helped **Shaya** earn a Best Chef nod from the James Beard Foundation. **Mopho** merges Vietnamese and Louisiana tastes in its spicy *som tam* salad. Award-winning **Pêche** prepares an exquisite whole Gulf fish. Recently opened **Primitivo** cooks meat over an open fire.

The restored **St. Roch Market** now houses all variety of locally sourced produce, as well as prepared foods from vendors including the Sweet Spot bakery, Lagos (for West African fare), Elysian Seafood,



Jazz trumpeter Kermit Ruffins at Sidney's Saloon

and coffee micro-roaster Coast Roast.

As for the traditional, “you can still get a po’boy at **Ye Olde College Inn**,” says local food columnist Ian McNulty. “But now the salads are made with greens from the farm across the street.”

### AFTER HOURS

“New Orleans always preferred classic ingredients and our own drinks such as Sazeracs and Ramos gin fizzes,” says cocktail columnist Wayne Curtis. “But in the past decade, our bartenders have become more experimental.” **Cure**, in the Freret neighborhood, pioneered the craft cocktail trend here. **SoBou**, **Bar Tonique**, and **Sylvain**, all in the French Quarter, took up the challenge. In the Lower Garden District, **Barrel Proof** pours whiskey by the shot.

Music naturally complements drinks. **Chickie Wah Wah** and **Bacchanal** both book notable New Orleans musicians such as Helen Gillet.

### ATLAS



There’s more than just one Mardi Gras parade. The sci-fi-themed **Krewe of Chewbacchus** struts through the Bywater and Marigny neighborhoods.

Last year 37 TV and film productions were shot in New Orleans, including FX Networks’ **American Horror Story**.

There are 95 miles of bike-ways in the city, compared with fewer than 5 in 2005.

### WHERE TO SHOP

#### MAKERS’ MARKS

Local artisans craft and sell goods imbued with a distinct New Orleans flavor. The Wild Life Reserve sells its own hipster line of mens and womens clothing but also mentors and promotes up-and-coming designers. In the Lower Garden District, Tchoup Industries’ bags and backpacks are made using regionally sourced repurposed materials. Gogo Borgerding creates cuff bracelets, necklaces, and other jewelry from metal. The Uptown store Hattie Sparks stocks black glycerin soaps that dissolve to reveal a white ceramic bird inside. Proceeds benefit the BP oil spill cleanup in the Gulf of Mexico.

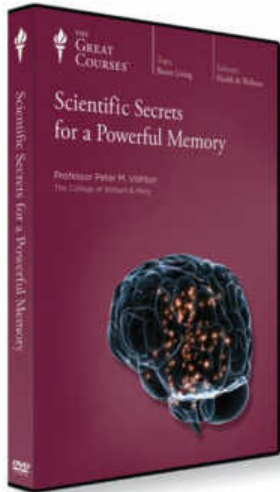


Jewelry by Gogo Borgerding



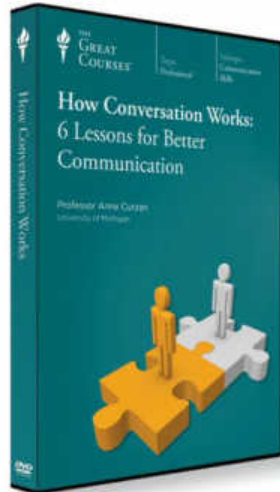


# Improve Your Memory and Communication Skills with These Lessons You Can Take in Your Home or Car



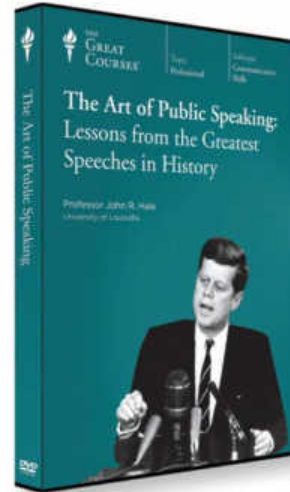
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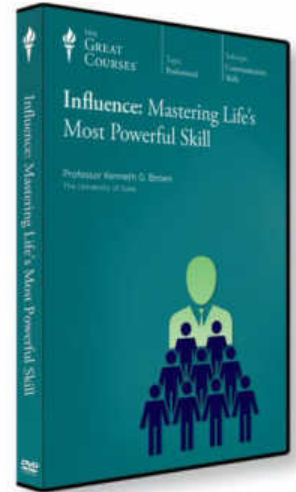
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# SHAOLIN SUMMER

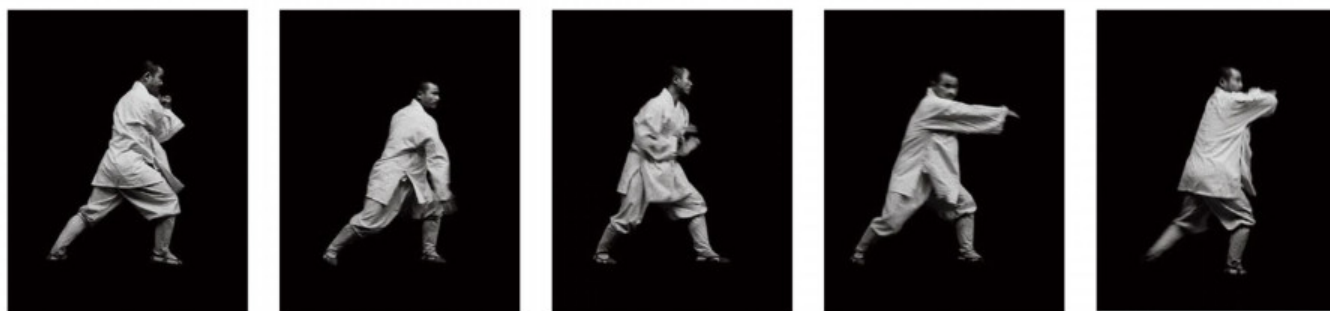
THEIR HOME LIFE UNDER STRESS,  
A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER FIND  
REDEMPTION—AT A CHINESE  
SCHOOL FOR WARRIORS

BY KAYLIE JONES



## WE'RE STANDING IN A ROW LIKE SOLDIERS

at attention. It's the mandatory lineup, 8:30 a.m., in a steaming concrete courtyard at the Qufu Shaolin Kung Fu School. I can't quite believe I'm here, in China, 330 miles south of Beijing. ¶ The only time I remember feeling this anxious and uncertain was on my first day of preschool. Then, as now, I had no social or cultural reference for what was about to take place. ¶ I look around for my 15-year-old daughter, Eyrna, but can't



see her. We've been assigned to different groups, which probably is good. I won't be able to focus on her, which will make me focus on myself—something I both want and don't want to do. This adventure was her idea; she has been studying Chinese history, including the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, an advocate of self-cultivation who was born in the adjacent city of Qufu. I'm realizing I'll need a lot of Confucianism to propel me through what lies ahead: four weeks of intense training under the tutelage of Shaolin warrior monks.

Sweat trickles down my arms, legs, and back. At 52, I'm the oldest student by at least a decade. The people near me, martial arts enthusiasts from around the world, appear lean and very fit, well prepared for the upcoming rigors. They're not even sweating.

What in the world was I thinking?

Eyrna and I have been on our own for months, since my husband, her father, was hospitalized for treatment-resistant depression. Looking back on this cataclysm in our family life, I feel now that we were standing on the deck of a sturdy ship that slowly was sinking—and even as the floor tilted beneath my feet, I refused to see it. In the end, I had two choices: go down with the ship or grab Eyrna and run.

We've run, thousands of miles from home and all that is familiar. Shipwrecked and clinging to each other on our little desert island, the two of us need both distance from our immediate reality and a goal, a new direction, to aim for. Pondering this, a wave of panic washes over me. Our sole connection to the place we've traveled to is our passion for martial arts, which Eyrna and I have studied for more than ten years. If there is

one thing the martial arts have taught us it's that when you're knocked down, you get up. Almost as important to me lately has been an accompanying maxim: There is no shame in getting knocked down. No shame. Still, a feeling of guilt, of wanting to delete the previous year of tumult from my daughter's life, has plagued me. That is about to change.

SHAOLIN KUNG FU is the archetypal martial art of China, developed by monks at the first Shaolin Temple, established in the fifth century in neighboring Henan Province. It also is one of the most difficult martial arts to master. Shaolin monks begin training at age eight and practice eight hours a day for at least ten years.

This first week will be hugely challenging for me, but, with my years of training and the wisdom of Confucius's teachings, not impossible. Still standing at attention, I repeat to myself, this was a good idea.

Our *shifu* (master), a 34th-generation Shaolin warrior monk in his 30s, paces before us, assessing what he has to work with. Then he spreads his arms and shouts, "Go, go!"

Everyone takes off, sprinting through the gold-and-crimson gates of the school's white-walled compound and into the surrounding Shimen Forest National Park. We're running? I'm appalled. I haven't run since college. Plus, my new Feiyue training shoes have no cushion in the soles, and I didn't bring running shoes. I don't own running shoes. How far are we running?

You can do this, I goad myself. You kickboxed six days a week to get into shape. You're in shape.

**A statue (right) guards Qufu's Cemetery of Confucius, part of a World Heritage site that includes the Temple of Confucius.**







The strongest students, whose bodies ripple with muscle, lope ahead like gazelles. They'll be back at the school before the rest of us have reached the halfway point.

Local farmers and workers pause by the side of the road to watch the spectacle of panting foreigners stagger by. Their eyes linger longest on me. Or am I imagining that?

I'm not. Look, they're laughing. It must be because of my age. In traditional Chinese society, I'm meant to be a grandmother, not a kung fu student. Then I recall a line in Confucius's *Analects*: "At 40, I had no more doubts." I'll show them.

I pick up the pace. Green fields of corn on either side of the narrow road undulate in the summer heat. Sweat gushes off me. I feel ready to collapse, but my mind refuses to let my body stop. By the time I reenter the school's gates, I've resolved to buy whatever running shoes I can find.

"How far did we run?" I ask Kiah, a 19-year-old Australian who is dressed in a collared shirt and long black shorts, like a proper schoolgirl. I barely get the words out between breaths.

"Two kilometers," she replies. About a mile. "We run three times a day. That was the warm-up; now the training begins."

My class is held in an enormous hall that feels like a steam bath. I'll be observed, and judgments about my abilities will be passed. I spot Eyrna through a window; her group is practicing outside under a blazing sun. She moves with no hesitation, her kicks rising high above her head. She looks positively elegant—elegant, sweat free, in the prime of her youth. And happy. The sight energizes me.

Class starts with kicks and punches—straight-legged, bent-kneed, jumping—back and forth. I'm keeping up, though I'm leaving puddles everywhere. Push, I tell myself. Then a sabotage thought tiptoes in: Why? For what? My father's voice enters my head. A Golden Gloves boxer, gruff veteran of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and author of the 1951 war novel *From Here to Eternity*, James Jones, my dad, died at 55 of congestive heart failure. I flash back to the time he stood in front of my eighth-grade English class and was asked, "Why do you write?" He answered with the story of British climber George Mallory, who, when asked why he needed to climb Mount Everest, answered—my father told the class of 13-year-olds, tears streaming from his eyes—"Because it is there."

Well, I am here—and unlike Mallory, who didn't make it down Everest (his remains were recovered only in 1999, by National Geographic grantee Conrad Anker), I'm going to finish this. Sometimes we have to travel halfway around the world to repair our souls.

TO BE UP AT 6 A.M. FOR TAI CHI, I go to bed at 8 p.m. Not Eyrna. My teen hangs out happily with the 20-year-olds, playing video games and watching movies. I had wanted this to be our shared experience, but she's going her own way. As days pass, I barely catch sight of her. This makes me feel surprisingly alone but I

leave her be, focusing on our upcoming visit to Qufu, just to the south, where I hope Confucian wisdom will rub off on us.

Five other students, Eyrna, and I share a taxi van to town. The road is jammed with mopeds, overburdened trucks, and every imaginable type of clatter car, all honking. A few shiny sedans with tinted windows speed past. Roadside stalls sell fruits and vegetables, of which only watermelon looks familiar.

Confucius lived 500 years before Christ; his philosophies, formed during a time of political turmoil, have shaped Chinese culture and thought for more than two millennia. Confucianism is based on *ren*, a principle of self-discipline and loving others while striving to better one's mind and body. Paramount is developing a clear head, devoid of anxious thought. Nothing could sound better right now.

We begin our explorations at what some consider the end: the Cemetery of Confucius, outside Qufu's ancient city wall. A walk on a cypress-lined avenue, filled with excited Chinese visitors, brings us through a blue gate filigreed with gold Chinese script. We have entered a World Heritage area where, for more than 2,400 years, Confucius's descendants—some 100,000 so far—have been interred with the pomp accorded the most honored heads of state. My eyes take in burial mounds and stone stelae as plentiful as the cypress and pine trees that form a vast green parasol (one tree is planted for every grave). Statues of officials and animals stand guard. Only the buzz of cicadas and electric tour buses whizzing by disturbs the silence.

Following the surging crowd, we arrive at Confucius's tomb, a large burial mound covered with flowers and offerings, and fronted by an incense burner and a stela carved with Chinese characters. A feeling of reverence, as I have in cathedrals, floats

with the incense smoke on the still air. I watch a Chinese man bow over and over. I imagine he, like me, has aspirations to overcome adversity with a lucid Confucian mind.

The Confucian golden rule states that one must never impose on others what one would not impose on oneself. This gives me pause: I've been imposing harsh judgments and demands on myself that I would never impose upon others. Except, maybe, I demand too much of my daughter. I buy a stick of incense and light it. Please help me give myself and Eyrna a break.

A BREAK of sorts comes one morning when my shifu, Shi Xing Lin, tells me—through his translator, Cindy—that I'm doing well for my age. So well that he allows me to skip "power training" to study bagua with Master Wu. An "internal" style of kung fu, bagua is softer on the joints and can be practiced into old age. Wu Shifu, 69, is a baguazhang master. I respond that I have no intention of skipping anything. My shifu smiles. In that moment I realize he understands I aim to do my very best and know my only enemy is myself. What he doesn't know is I'm here for a powerful reason: to come to terms with mistakes I've made, the most

*Continued on page 86*



Gates punctuate Qufu's old city walls.



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# BOOMERANG ROAD

AUSTRALIA'S GREAT OCEAN ROAD AIMS  
TO PULL YOU BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN

BY JONATHAN B. TOURTELLOT





The limestone stacks known as the Twelve Apostles rise along Australia's dramatic southern coast.



# A MOB OF KANGAROOS

grazes in a chilly pasture, then flees in front of an approaching pickup truck. ¶ The herd looks like a bunch of deer on pogo sticks. The scene is unfolding outside the ecolodge window I'm peering from on this early winter morning in August. It's my second day on Australia's Great Ocean Road, a scenic highway that follows the coastline west of Melbourne for 151 miles through Victoria. Admittedly, I harbor some skepticism of this legendary road, wondering how the GOR could possibly rival my favorite U.S. coastal drive: the long, winding, two-lane sections of California State Route 1. These two drives are probably the only in the world that can claim the same mix: rugged scenery, some of Earth's tallest trees, sea stacks of towering rock, and surfers. ¶ But marsupial wildlife as prebreakfast comic relief? Well played, Australia.

**OF COURSE**, I expected to encounter native flora and fauna on this road. What I hadn't anticipated was how much I would also learn about local history and the refreshingly easygoing Aussies themselves, exemplified by my guide and travel companion, Geoff Reynolds.

We begin our Great Ocean Road explorations as most do, leaving the town of Geelong, about an hour outside of Melbourne, and heading westward through a commercial strip that looks like the outskirts of any U.S. city. But beyond the generic lineup of McDonald's, Domino's, and KFC, something more intriguing appears: the sign for Narana Creations, displaying an Aboriginal-looking painting of a lizard.

Narana turns out to be a craft shop and Aboriginal community center. It's a fitting first stop, dedicated to the people whose ancestors predated European arrivals by millennia.

Cultural interpreter Ian Kirby, of the Wathaurong tribe, pulls me away from an engrossing map showing the continent's former tribal territories to demonstrate a didgeridoo. Then he takes us out back for boomerang practice.

"Hold it at the one o'clock position and get a wrist snap into the throw," he counsels. My boomerang does come back—sort of. Like, over there. Better than Reynolds's anyway, which whirls off at a right angle.

A bit later, in the town of Torquay—the official start of the designated highway—we get our first look at the circumpolar sea known as the Southern Ocean. At Bells Beach we pause to watch a few wet-suited surfers tackling some eight-foot waves, undeterred by 50-degree winter breezes. This is the Surf Coast, its waves whipped up across 2,000 miles of unobstructed fetch

from Antarctica, delighting international wave-riders and tearing the hell out of the cliffs west of Cape Otway.

The smooth two-lane GOR winds onward below green coastal hills, a far cry from the one-lane dirt road that first opened along this previously inaccessible coast. Inspired by the early 20th-century growth of national park tourism in the United States, visionary Geelong mayor Howard Hitchcock championed the new highway.

Construction started in 1919 as a project for soldiers newly returned from World War I. It took 13 years to complete and is dedicated to those who did not return. It is said to be the longest war memorial in the world.

At each scenic pull-off, of which there is an abundance, interpretive plaques share insights into area history and nature. One plaque urges protection for local hooded plovers. The visitors center at Erskine River portrays 50-plus species

of local orchids. Another, farther west, reads like a line from "Jabberwocky": "southern brown bandicoots, short-beaked echidnas, swamp wallabies." And how can you not love a bird called the superb fairy-wren?

**DRIVING INTO THE RESORT TOWN** of Apollo Bay, Reynolds happily enumerates for me his various injuries acquired during his years playing for the Geelong Cats, an Aussie-rules football team. I find I'm counting on him to be my window on Australian society.

At our lunch stop, for instance, I pop into the restaurant's restroom and encounter a cross-cultural mystery. An advertisement posted on the wall catches my eye; the poster features a happy-looking bloke standing in front of some kind of carpentry project, urging me to join "the Australian Men's Shed Association."

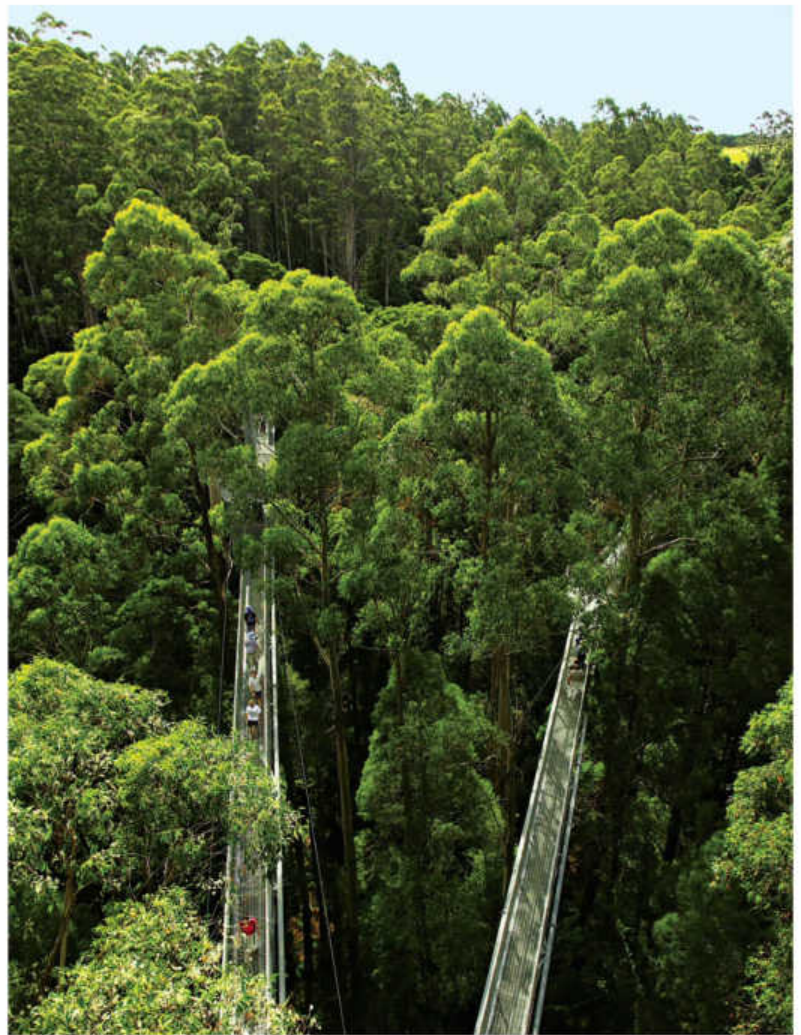
"What's a shed? Why an association?" I demand of Reynolds when I return to our table.

He lights up: "Ah, the Shed!" and launches into a description of this apparently glorious institution. Yes, it would indeed be in the backyard, and yes, you would work with power tools there. But that's beside the point.

"There's a television, and several stools so your mates can come around and watch the game," he says. "It's got a refrigerator, and it holds only one thing: beer."

Clearly this is the man cave raised to an exalted level. Funded by the federal government, chapters of the association organize work, health, and community projects—though Reynolds barely mentions this part.





Victoria's secrets: The wild coast of the Great Ocean Road is legendary among surfers (above). Towering some 80 feet in the air, a steel-structured walkway (right) leads across the rain forest canopy of the rugged Otway Ranges. Warrnambool's historic harbor (below) preserves the charm and lore of its maritime past.







Out to sea: Guests at the rental Pole House (above) sleep cantilevered 12 stories above Fairhaven Beach along the Great Ocean Road. Hikers traverse the sand dunes of Johanna Beach (below), a popular surf spot in Great Otway National Park.





CONTINUING WESTWARD, we enter an arm of the sprawling, amoeboid Great Otway National Park. The park is one reason that the roughly hundred-mile-wide Great Ocean Road corridor, from Torquay to the South Australia state line, is recognized as one of Australia's 16 "national landscapes." Few, if any, other countries have so formally recognized that tourism depends on protecting the landscapes we visitors come to see.

Case in point is Maits Rest rain forest walk, one of Reynolds's favorite stops. "Never has it rained," he maintains, "until now." A wooden walkway winds through an understory of tree ferns. Water drips from the fronds, from the myrtle beeches rising above, and—from far, far higher—towering mountain ash eucalypti, the world's tallest flowering trees.

The park protects much of Cape Otway, the southernmost point on the Great Ocean Road. We drive out to the Otway Lighthouse, passing through woods of manna gum eucalypti largely denuded by koalas. Deforestation and other habitat loss in much of the koalas' natural range have led to overpopulation inside this reserve. In one tree I count more than a dozen of them curled up asleep. It's an infestation of fur balls.

Conservationists Shayne Neal and Lizzie Corke welcome us to their nearby Great Ocean Ec lodge. Guests around the dinner table include a couple from New Zealand and an esteemed economist from Austria. After nightfall, Neal asks, "Want to see the gliders?"

We pick our way over dark marshy ground to an outbuilding. Inside, illuminated only by soft red light, we see them. Sugar gliders are the marsupial parallel to North America's flying squirrels, only bigger and cuter, with huge eyes for night vision. The economist marvels as they willingly feed out of his hand.

**THE NEXT MORNING** Otway park ranger Mick Cannon arrives in his truck to take me to the Great Ocean Walk, a trail that traces the coast for 57 miles. He's picked a less traveled section on the east side of Cape Otway for our morning hike.

First, though, we have to contend with a big wallaby sitting squarely in the middle of the road to the trailhead. The animal stares at us, refusing to budge and forcing Cannon to squeeze the truck around it. Once on foot, we file through red-barked trees. The ranger points out some carnivorous little sundew flowers at our feet, their blooms sprouting hairs tipped with a dot of sweet insect-trapping glue. Farther into the woods, yellowtail parrots poke around in the upper boughs. At Parker Inlet, Cannon shows me shell debris falling out of the mudstone—an Aboriginal midden, laid down thousands of years ago by distant ancestors of our friends back at Narana.

After my walk, Reynolds and I stop for lunch at the Princetown General Store and Do Duck Inn café, where we find a counter and two or three customers. The place has all the formality of a bachelor's living room. One of the guys in charge takes our order and a few minutes later comes around the counter to present another customer with a sandwich, held in a pair of tongs.

Reynolds finds this amusingly dainty. "Getting kind of toff here," he teases, a typical gibe in anti-classist Australia.

He's rewarded with a grin and some one-downmanship. "Yeah, I licked the tongs clean before I served 'im."

**THE MIGHTY SEA STACKS** mislabeled the Twelve Apostles constitute what many consider the climax of a Great Ocean Road trip. I say mislabeled because there are only eight of them, Number Nine having fallen into the sea some time ago. There were never 12; authorities adopted the name as a stronger tourism pull than the previous moniker, Sow and Piglets. Stacks of golden-layered limestone tower up to 15 stories high.

Hacked out of the coast by the relentless surf, the massive Apostles attest to the power of the treacherous Shipwreck Coast. One of the roughest sea passages in the world lies offshore, where ships have to "thread the needle" between Cape Otway and King Island. Storm waves can lift more than 50 feet high. In the 19th century, this was the only practical way to reach Melbourne from Europe. At least 180 vessels failed.

The most famous wreck provided one of Australia's greatest rescue stories and gave its name to the Loch Ard Gorge in Port Campbell National Park. Reynolds and I gaze down at the gorge, watching tourists clamber up and down the stairs. I wonder how many bother to learn the story: During a winter storm on June 1, 1878, the clipper *Loch Ard*, having departed

## HACKED OUT OF THE COAST BY THE RELENTLESS SURF, THE MASSIVE TWELVE APOSTLES ATTEST TO THE POWER OF THE TREACHEROUS SHIPWRECK COAST.

from England, crashed on the rocks of nearby Muttonbird Island. Only one of the 54 on board, apprentice sailor Tom Pearce, managed to struggle to shelter, in this gorge. He then heard the cries of the only other survivor, Eva Carmichael, 19, clinging to wreckage at sea. Pearce plunged back into punishing surf against all odds to save her.

There was, you could say, a third survivor, made of porcelain. It awaits us just before the GOR enters Warrnambool, at the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village. Next to this re-created cluster of 19th-century buildings, a maritime museum features a delicate four-foot-high ceramic peacock, now valued at some \$4 million, rotating on a pedestal protected by invisible-beam alarms. It had been headed for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition and miraculously remained intact amid the *Loch Ard* wreckage.

Sites like this village will be packed come summer. In Port Campbell, Reynolds had introduced me to John McInerney, a retired park director and tour leader. "Seventy percent of visitors come from Melbourne on day-trips," he told me. That's not long enough. They need more experiences to be, as he calls it, "converted" to the region and its people.

On this winter day, we've got the village almost to ourselves. I stroll past the Leadlight Emporium, the Clock and Instrument Repairer, the Undertaker ("funerals solemnly conducted"). A fire burns in an empty pub. Just then, three musicians show up. This evening, they tell me, there will be sea chanteys and old Irish tunes. Alas, I'm out of time.

**JONATHAN B. TOURELLOT** lives in Lovettsville, Virginia. His last feature for *Traveler* explored volcanoes in Iceland.



## THE INSIDER

# Great Ocean Road, Australia

VICTORIA'S BEST KNOWN highway runs 150 miles from Torquay to near Warrnambool, but the scenic drive continues along the Victoria coast to the South Australia state line. Drive it the other way, from west to east, to parallel the route of 19th-century shipborne immigrants.

### HOW TO EXPLORE

Guides are worth it. Mark Brack, a lighthouse keeper's son who sports a tattoo of the Otway Lighthouse on his right leg, runs **Cape Otway Shipwreck Tours** in varying flavors. The eco-friendly **Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk** offers multiday programs on the Great Ocean Walk.

### WHAT TO DO

Opportunities are plentiful for hiking, surfing, wildlife watching, kayaking, and fishing. **Surf World Museum** at Torquay will fill you in on local wave-riding history. If you want to join the resident kangaroos on the course at the **Anglesea Golf Club**,

you'll have to play a round—\$25 for 9 holes, \$45 for 18. You'll be dodging a fair number of parrots, cockatoos, and herons there, too.

For a flight over the Twelve Apostles, Loch Ard Gorge, and cliffs of golden limestone, book with **12 Apostles Helicopters**. It's hyped and touristy, but still worth it.

Also vertiginous but free to explore, the 86 "Gibson Steps" zigzag more than 200 feet down to a fishing beach. On the **Great Ocean Walk**, don't pass up the shallow basins provided for rinsing your footgear. That way you won't spread the exotic *Phytophthora* fungus, deadly to native plants.



Weaving baskets at Narana Creations

## CULTURE GO NATIVE

Aboriginal connections deepen the Great Ocean Road experience. Narana Creations, outside Geelong, is among the best heritage sites, enlivened by art shows, hands-on programs, and emus in the garden. West of Warrnambool you can often find a guide at the Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve, a lake-filled volcanic crater prominent in Aboriginal lore. Farther west, guides give tours of the remains of permanent Aboriginal stone houses at Lake Condah, a National Heritage site.

### WHERE TO STAY

Consider **self-catering**, Aussie style. Rental villas, apartments, and houses abound along the coast. Book early.

If you'd rather be catered to, book a night in Lorne's gingerbread **Grand Pacific Hotel** for a taste of Victorian Victoria. At Cape Otway, the **Great Ocean Ecolodge** immerses guests in nature with a touch of luxury.

### WHERE TO EAT

You can find excellent seafood all along the Great Ocean Road, served with a wide variety of Australian wines. In Apollo Bay, try **La Bimba**, whose menu also lists local meats and organic vegetables. **The Waves** restaurant in Port Campbell augments its seafood with local dishes such as wallaby, when available.

In Warrnambool, the **Pippies by the Bay** restaurant at the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum overlooks the historic village, but locals come just for the food. Order the fresh squid.

### HOW TO PREPARE

*A Traveller's History of Australia*, by John H. Chambers, escorts readers from Aboriginal times to the modern age. Download the **Great Ocean Road app** for a geolocated directory of services.

## ATLAS



Held at Bells Beach, the world's oldest pro surfing competition, Rip Curl Pro, dates to 1961.

Growing in the heathlands around Anglesea are 110 orchid species, among the most of any region in the world.

Once the stomping grounds of dinosaurs, the Great Otway National Park now crawls with carnivorous snails.





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## Colorado River

*Continued from page 38*

Our dories will bob like toys through the schist of Granite, Hermit, and Crystal rapids. The water soaks us but no one makes a mistake; the dories appear to magically correct themselves.

"You two want to row?" Haarr shoots back to me and Johnno. My big brother goes first, and within minutes we spin sideways, then backward.

"We're going to diiee," Haarr screams. The word "die" ricochets off the canyon. Lesson one: Dories don't automatically correct themselves. One wrong stroke, and the river steers the vessel where it chooses. I take the oars. Twenty strokes, and I have the feel. Rounding a bend, we glide into a canyon shadow—and I hear a roar ahead. White water. My heart thumps and my hands begin to sweat.

"Want the oars back?" I ask Haarr.

"You've got this one. Satan's Jaws; no biggie." Funny. I maneuver what now feel like frail wooden sticks and try to read the water. I decide to follow bubble lines that represent currents, but with each stroke the river fights me. I adjust, overcorrect, struggle. My arms ache.

"Come on, Pete," my brother ribs me. "Keep us straight. Keep us alive." We buck down the rapids, seesaw through a train of waves, and emerge. Alive. What I don't know: Haarr made up the name "Satan's Jaws." I strong-armed our craft through an unnamed, insignificant riffle.

DAY ELEVEN: A nervous energy ripples through our group. We can hear ahead the roar of "the most formidable reach of white water" in the Grand Canyon, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Lava Falls, one of Earth's great rapids.

"We need to arrive with the perfect water level," warns Sjoden, referencing the Southwest drought that has strained water resources. The river is running exceptionally low, so we'll wait for the swell of dam-released water. We park our flotilla at river mile 167 and use the time for a stroll up National Canyon. Within seconds we enter a labyrinth of what Potochnik tells us is "Muav limestone." After a bit, the canyon walls close in, creating a water-smoothed corridor of stone. Then Johnno points: a pool of blue water. Gleefully, the two of us jump in,

our laughter pinging off the rock walls.

On our way back to the boat, I turn a corner and almost collide with an elderly man carrying a bundle of plants. An elder of the Hualapai tribe, he says nothing, just peers up the canyon. Two other men follow, bearing green bundles.

Every year, revenue from Colorado's hydroelectric operations funds spiritual canyon journeys for area Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Hualapai tribes, who believe certain side canyons represent the place they come from and eventually return to. By coincidence, our trip has aligned with spiritual journeys for Navajo, Hopi, and Hualapai tribal members.

I introduce myself to the men, and the elder says, "We are blessing tobacco for our ceremonies. We find it wild here in the canyon. The harder to find, the better for ceremonies." He pauses, then adds, "Welcome to Hualapai."

I want to ask more, about the canyon, his life, their spirit world, but they're on a mission, and my group is gathering back by our dories. "Thank you for letting us visit your beautiful land," I say.

He looks at me sharply, then smiles. "I grew up there, on the ridge." He points with his chin. "I'm used to all you coming here. I just hope you respect it."

Respect for this land is what President Theodore Roosevelt had in mind in 1903 when he looked from the south rim near today's visitors center. "Leave it as it is," he said of the canyon. "The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it." His love for wild places would lead to his declaring the canyon a national monument; in 1919, it became a national park. Overall, Roosevelt's words have been heeded: Grand Canyon remains fairly unmarred. Still, development voices are louder than anytime in the past century, and water woes show little sign of reversal. As I hike back to the river, I think of words Ben Franklin wrote: "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

The well at Lava Falls is low but, we are about to find, far from dry—the river has risen enough to hide the staircase of rocks below, which creates the churn.

The first four dories make perfect runs. Our boatload hopes for the same. All goes swimmingly, until it doesn't—until we become that submarine with one operational oar. We don't have time to unlatch the spare oar before we careen

sideways, then backward. We plummet over a roiling rush of water and enter the fearsome V-wave, two lateral churns of waterpower that crash to form a frothy mayhem large enough to swallow the Loch Ness Monster. As the V sucks us in, Moqui announces loudly but with notable calm, "Time for plan B," followed by "Get ready...and...hiiiiigh siiiiiide!"

Sunni and Nicole, in the stern, look up: An overhead wave stares them in the face. When it hits, we lunge to the highest side of the boat, facing downstream, to counter the energy. The water buries us, and we plunge into an icy emerald darkness. Everything submerges: dory, bodies, even the roar of the rapid. All is silence. Slow motion. Milliseconds feel like minutes as the dory rolls onto its side. Our *Okeechobee*, built, as a boatman said, "with tissue paper and baby bird bones," swirls into the hydraulic mouth of Lava Falls. Somewhere I sense a giant grin; Johnno and I sit in the front row in an overdue sibling adventure in the heart of a river that helped shape the greatest of canyons—and much of our childhood.

The V-wave releases our dory and we pitch sideways into the last wave, a standing tsunami called Big Kahuna. Smashing into the wall of water, we start to flip. Amazingly, Big Kahuna lets the dory go. Johnno and I still sit in the bow, upright. Somehow we survive, oar-less, shepherded by the Colorado River.

"High fives!" Moqui hollers, immediately followed by "Now bail, dammit; we are NOT done." In a frantic scramble of arms, laughter, and bailing scoops we empty the listing *Okeechobee*, and grin.

That evening, around a campfire on Tequila Beach, the tension of our biggest boating day deflates as we realize that our run has ended surprisingly well. Tequila and stories flow, and soon everyone in our group, ages 24 to 78, agrees we need more time in the canyon. We understand now how someone comes for a single trip down the Colorado and stays a lifetime: Every river mile has washed away layers of daily life from each of us, a random tribe of souls who share a new sense of awe for this walled masterpiece sculpted by a river. I only hope we all find the collective commitment to "leave it as it is."

---

**PETE McBRIDE** directed the award-winning Colorado River film *Delta Dawn*.





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## Shaolin

*Continued from page 74*

important of which now is my daughter being without her father.

The minute my daughter was born, I vowed to give her a safe and consistent childhood, perhaps to compensate for my own. My parents were huge drinkers; most nights, it seemed, they were out at a party or brought the party to our house. They probably should not have had children, though I know my father was thrilled when I came along. Still, having grown up during the Great Depression, he didn't believe in coddling. He did offer help and advice when I asked for it, but that didn't happen often because he was so busy writing.

There was one thing he enjoyed teaching me, beginning when I was five: how to box. Jab, cross, hook. Jab, cross, hook. He was pleased with my hand-eye coordination. When I took up kickboxing decades later, his instructions came right back to me.

In a way, I've brought Eyrna here to learn her own version of jab, cross, hook—as survival skills. It doesn't escape me that, in Eastern cultures, one's children are an extension of oneself. In taking on this difficult, ancient martial art, she and I are shaking our fists at recent events in our family life.

TWO WEEKS HAVE PASSED, and I've learned only the first four moves of the tai chi 24-step form, another kung fu discipline. A fundamental move—circling my arms in the correct direction—eludes me. Every morning when I wake, I consider quitting. This must be showing.

"Shifu says when he was a boy, he was very angry to have tai chi practice because it was so slow and boring," Cindy tells me. "But it became very helpful to him."

I confide I don't know why tai chi is so difficult for me.

"Shifu says don't think, just focus on your qi. Stay only with the first moves," she advises.

I used to believe "qi," or life force, was a myth, some kind of legerdemain. But last week, I watched my shifu press the tip of a sharpened spear to the soft space between his collarbones and push his entire weight against it, forcing the wooden shaft to bow to the ground. The spear did not penetrate his skin.

I start my form over, doing my best to empty my mind—which right now is reminding me to get some new running shoes—and think only about breathing into my lower abdomen. I step out with my left leg, bend my knees, bend my arms, circling, not thinking. The movements flow like water. I feel no fear, no regret, no shame, no guilt. I am practicing tai chi. I am here.

"Yeessss," my shifu says to me in English. I break into a smile and bow to him.

ANCIENT PINE TREES tower above the Temple of Confucius, a complex of courtyards and red-walled buildings near Qufu's center constituting the oldest and largest site dedicated to the thinker. Eyrna and I, nearing the end of our time in China, have come to connect with the man as he was when he was alive.

*In a way, I have brought my daughter to China to learn her own version of jab, cross, hook—as survival skills. In taking on this ancient martial art, she and I are shaking our fists at recent events in our family life.*

We make our way through three courtyards to Dacheng Hall, the central edifice, where towering sticks of incense burn in a gigantic cauldron. The pagoda-style roofs glint with touches of gilt. Visitors, mostly Chinese, mill around taking pictures, bowing heads, lighting incense, praying to their ancestors.

My thoughts return to my father, who died before I grew up. What would he have thought of my failures? I know he would have been proud that he raised a fighter.

During my last training session, my shifu instructed each of us students to find a corner in the garden and practice qigong movements. I did, and with time left, stood in a breathing meditation, my palms pressed to my abdomen. Slowly, inexorably, something rose within me, then broke loose. Sobs wracked my being. I was struggling to compose myself—I wasn't sure what this was about—when I saw the shifu approach with Cindy.

"Shifu says," Cindy warned me gently, "that you must not go straight from qigong to static meditation. Next time, you must try active meditation. Hold the ball of energy in your hands. Shifu says in a few minutes you will be all right."

That was grief, I wanted to tell him. But mindful of the need for self-discipline, I didn't say a word, thanked him, and bowed. Grief—undisciplined, unbalancing—is not the kind of thing you share with your shifu.

Now Eyrna and I sit silently across from Dacheng Hall, on the steps of a building lined with red pillars. A hot breeze whispers past, and red prayer tablets near us jingle like wind chimes.

"I want to come back next summer," Eyrna says quietly.

I choke up for some reason, and tell her I'm proud of her.

She has had a good time on this journey. She was treated as an adult, pushed to her limits, and judged only on her practice. No one knew about our calamity. Here, she was free.

"You should come back, too," she says.

"Hmmm." I want to tell her I understand now why people sell their belongings and join ashrams and monasteries; a life of extreme exercise and meditation looks good to me. I've never been in better shape. But in the quiet of this moment, I realize I no longer wish I'd handled anything in the past year differently, or had a different year. My work here, toward Shaolin strength and Confucian calm, is, for now at least, done. I no longer need those running shoes, because I no longer need to run.

**KAYLIE JONES** is the author of seven books. Her most recent, the novel *The Anger Meridian*, was published in July.

### LEARN MORE

The Qufu Shaolin Kung Fu School, located in Shimen Forest National Park 20 miles north of Qufu city—known for its Temple and Cemetery of Confucius World Heritage sites—offers courses in martial arts; [www.shaolinkungfu.com](http://www.shaolinkungfu.com).

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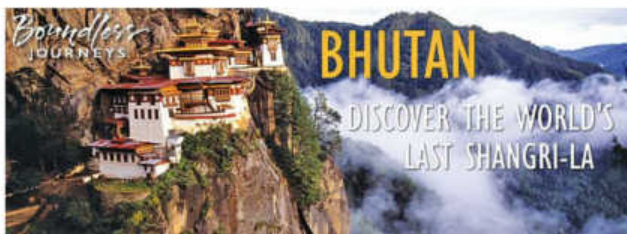
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COTTON COULSON (1952-2015)

## Keen Eye on the World

*Remembering the life of one of our own*



ANTARCTICA. ESTONIA. BERLIN. FLORENCE. With his wife and professional partner Sisse Brimberg always nearby, photographer Cotton Coulson framed the world in a way that made it beautiful and real at the same time. “He was especially adept at approaching a European city,” notes *Traveler’s* Director of Photography Dan Westergren. “He trained his lens on what gave a place its soul.” Coulson and Brimberg, who lived in Paris, Copenhagen, and most recently Glasgow, shot more than a dozen stories for the magazine over the past decade. Coulson, who died in a diving accident, was also part of our larger family, shooting for *National Geographic* and serving as a photography expert on many National Geographic Expeditions. A life is lost, but the view remains. —*The Editors*

COTTON COULSON AND SISSE BRIMBERG/KEENPRESS



Castle Square, through the sheer curtains of a window in Warsaw, Poland



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A large bison stands on a green, grassy hillside in the foreground. Behind it is a dense forest of trees with golden-yellow foliage, suggesting autumn. In the far background, rugged mountains with patches of snow are visible under a sky with soft, colorful clouds. A paved road with yellow double lines runs across the bottom of the frame.

*It's time.*





# MONTANA

*Bison near Gardiner, MT, Gateway to Yellowstone National Park*

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